

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, January 23, 2007 - Library Board Room
01:30 PM - 04:25 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: David Edelstein, Vice-Chairperson: Faye Hill, Vicky Marshall, J. Robert Gordon

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pam Kiesner; Lizz Roberts; Gladys Fullford; Iris Kaneshige; Deb Brewer

Others: John Watts, Council Liaison, Kipp Drummond, Accounting Manager, Linda Langey, Margaret Ziegler, Velma Wendt, Stan Snapp, and Sam Taylor, Bellingham Herald

Called to Order: Regular session was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Chair David Edelstein.

Public Comment: Linda Langey is a member of the Guide Meridian/Cordata Neighborhood Association and on the Library Community Services Committee that wrote the report. Linda asked the board to consider an additional component to a bond measure for the new library. First she presented some background.

The Community Services Report states that not accounting for traffic or stop lights, the drive times for city residents to the library would be 10 minutes. Linda timed herself today. It took her 16 minutes with average traffic.

The moratorium has been lifted in Cordata. D. R. Horton is going to continue with their building on the north end of Cordata with 228 multi-family homes in the first phase and another 472 multi-family homes in the second phase, a total of 700. This is north of Linda, so she assumes it would take those residents 20 minutes to drive to the Central Library. There are also plans for an urban village north of there to the Smith Road.

Linda is very familiar with the Whatcom Community College campus. There is plenty of parking, but the location is a problem if we want to partner with WCC and put drop boxes or lockers in their library. It is an eight to ten minute brisk walk to the library. The idea that the library would be a quick stop for drop offs or pick ups won't work because of the location of the parking lot.

Linda's recommendation is that the Board consider for the bond, the renovation of Fairhaven Library and to provide library service on the North side. Linda recommends putting something in Cordata. There is an existing 20,000 square foot building completed on the outside with no interior walls. It has a 52 plus parking lot and landscaping. It is on major roads, Cordata Parkway and Horton; it is close to Madrona Clinic; and it is close to bus lines. Another alternative might be free space in Barkley Village that Mr. Talbot previously offered to the library.

Finally, Linda has heard arguments against a branch, and that everyone would want one in their own neighborhood. She said residents would be happy with a branch anywhere on the North side. Another argument was that most towns our size do not have branches. Linda called three of them, and they all said it was because their towns are very compact. Bellingham on the other hand is long and thin.

The final argument is what we would do if we open a branch and find we cannot support it. Linda suggests a maintenance fund for a branch in the operating budget in the bond. To recap, Linda said we need a small branch on the North end because of the growth. The two branches would help carry the load

when this building gets demolished. Linda offered to give anyone a tour of Cordata to show what she is talking about.

David thanked Linda for being an advocate of the library presence on the North end of town. Her effort is going to make certain that the Library Board looks very carefully at the North end of town in our comprehensive study of library services. As the City grows, the library system will grow with it. It's a matter of timing. We need to use our limited financial ability to do the best we can to serve the entire community. The Board is going to study it.

Linda thanked the Board for their fantastic example of civic service and hours spent on research.

Margaret Ziegler was at the City Council meeting. She was very proud of the Board presentation. It was very professional, and she is very pleased with the results.

David added that he was very proud of the Library Director's presentation. Pam did as fine a presentation as he has ever heard in City Council chambers. Pam added how proud she is of all of the Board.

Minutes approved: December 19, 2006 regular meeting minutes approved with one correction. The third paragraph on page four should end "Senior Center."
January 10, 2007 special meeting minutes approved as read.

Claims approved: December, 2006 general fund \$41,836.54; gift fund \$4,791.39;
REET fund \$7,000.00

Materials Withdrawn, fourth quarter: 4,365

Pam explained that part of the collection development process is not only to add new materials, but to withdraw old out-of-date, non-circulating, damaged materials. It is a circular process. About 20% of our materials are stored out of the public eye. Those are retrieved from closed stacks on the Mezzanine by staff. This is a common storage mechanism to have closed stacks, especially in academic libraries, but in a public library ideally most items would be out for the public.

The Whatcom Community Foundation statement for the Library Endowment Fund is in the packet.

Circulation Department Report: Pam introduced Iris Kaneshige, Head of Circulation, and Kipp Drummond, Accounting Manager for the City of Bellingham. Kipp is here to explain a policy recommendation on the Library's accounts receivable. We do not have the policy for review today, but Pam asked that the Board approve in concept the policy recommendations that are in Kipp's letter. A formal policy will be presented at the next regular meeting.

Kipp said Iris has a very good understanding of the mechanics. Kipp said that the Horizon system does not track what Accounting calls Aged Receivables. That is how much we have that is past due in six months to a year. Iris is not able to pull that information out of the system. Kipp has phoned the American Library Association, and has not been able to get an answer on this concept. It is something that is reasonable for library folks to not worry about too much. Kipp compared the national analysis to staff's information and his experience. The library is very much in line. It is an accounting number that goes into a City report that has Kipp's concern. We are talking about making a few changes, but in terms of day to day operations, Kipp has the sense the library is doing everything it can to recover monies that it is likely to recover.

Iris said the Accounts Receivable status on the books is \$919,000. It goes back to 1985. Before we migrated in 2004 to the automated Horizon library system, we did a purge of bad debt. The criteria we used in 2004 was to purge any account owing under \$50 with no activity for ten years. That was about \$149,000. We are asking the Board to approve establishing a policy that we can write off the bad debt, the monies we have not collected for a twelve year period, \$230,000. We would take that off the books and the automated library system. We do get some activity for ten years back. We would keep the 1997

to present in the Horizon system. We are asking the Board to approve purging everything from 12 years back. We have only two accounts left from 1985 because they were over \$50. In 1986 we have 116 accounts over \$50, etc. They have been sent to the credit bureau, but the collection people only go back seven years.

Kipp explained that if an individual whose account had been written off happened to come in and say they owe money, the library can still collect that money. Iris added that the names of accounts over ten years would no longer be in the system, but we would have hard copy records. Prior to the 2004 migration to the new system, we had a procedure to purge accounts every month that were \$2.00 or less and no activity in a two-year period. We have not purged any accounts since September 2004. Our database is getting very full. Because we have not purged any data, it appears our accounts receivable has grown immensely. We are establishing a formal procedure to clean and maintain the database in a timely monthly manner. In reality, this write-off is dollars that we are not going to see.

Any account that is over \$50 is sent to Unique Management Collection Agency. They work with libraries throughout the nation to retrieve and resolve the outstanding balances. Unique contacts the patron by phone and by letter. If patron brings the materials back, it gets resolved. The recovery rate we've had with Unique has been about 70-72%, which is pretty amazing. Unique charges \$8.95 for every account we send to them. It's a flat rate. On a monthly basis we send about 10 names a week. We started the partnership with Unique in May, 1999. We've submitted over 4,000 accounts to Unique. We have submitted \$466,000 in fines and fees in materials, and recovered \$229,000 in cash. When accounts are not resolved by Unique, after 120 days they are reported to credit bureaus.

The recommendations that Iris is asking the Board to approve in concept are on page two of the letter from Kipp. They are items number 1, 2 and 3 at the bottom. Kipp said the recommendations are an excellent step to get things cleaned up and to reestablish a pattern that was lost during the transition. The other piece is that once you write some off, there is a balance left, and how much of that balance will you collect. Then you come up with an allowance for bad debt, the amount you do not think you will collect. The amount you think you will collect will be the official accounts receivable. It will be useful for the Accounting Department to get a much better handle on it. Kipp recommends the policy to the Board unreservedly.

Iris has also talked with the county library system. They are on board with the concept. They are waiting to hear what the results are here today.

J. Gordon asked if the accounts that are purged are going into a paper tracking system. Iris answered that she will print the information before the data is purged. Iris has been working with the Technical Services Manager to work with the Horizon Library System to write a script to purge these accounts with no activity. J. suggested it would be helpful to write this into another program that would be easier to manage than paper copies. Iris said we will use the technology and may be able to keep a disc with the information. Kipp said all the names, amounts and dates could be exported to Excel. This could remain in Excel or be converted to Access. It could be readily accessed.

Faye asked if there was any information about libraries that have a forgiveness day. Pam said we do it for the teens. Some libraries do a "bring in a can of food for fine forgiveness." Many libraries do it. Others do not because people come to expect that. There is a gift of public funds issue when you forgive fines. We have not explored it although this library used to do it once in awhile.

Vicky moved to approve the library staff's recommendations on page 2 of Kipp's letter. Faye seconded. David asked if we can interface with Finance's invoices for sewer and water. Iris answered that we looked at other City Departments that have policies in place. Municipal Court is the only one, but they have other jurisdiction and other rules that they have to follow. The motion carries.

Iris also presented three graphs to impress on the Board that it is an exciting time at the library. Circulation activity is phenomenal. We ended 2006 with 1.2 million items in Circulation. That represents a 3% increase at Fairhaven Branch. The first graph shows the comparison between Fairhaven, Children's and Adult Departments and the total. Fairhaven's circulation has doubled since 1996. There has been a steady increase in the Adult Department from 2000 to 2006.

The second graph shows the comparison between the number of holds placed by BPL and WCLS patrons and the number of holds that have been filled by our staff. Holds are higher because the county system holds are included. Also, some items may not be readily available.

The third graph shows total circulation at Central, self checkout and assisted checkout. On an average self checkout is used about 50 – 52% in the Adult Department and about 24% in the Children's Department. This is not a full year of data. Adult checkout started in February and Children's started in May. Assisted checkout is required for CDs which are in security cases. Patrons also use assisted checkout for fines, interlibrary loans, and overdue items. Most noticeable is the much shorter lines for assisted checkout after a holiday.

Iris commented on the trend of materials in motion between WCLS and BPL. Back in 1977 the majority of items going to WCLS were from Bellingham. It was about 159% of materials we were sending. Now the scale has become even.

In an average month we register about 500 new borrowers.

Vicky commented that we have the most wonderful, kind, generous and patient staff. The community is fortunate to have such great staff. The Board appreciates the staff's patience. Iris commented that adding the self checkout stations has really helped the staff's workload. There had been a sense of work overload when the long lines developed. It has calmed down, so staff feels they can now take the time to work more with patrons.

Communications: Pam circulated copies of nine emails that were sent to City Council. They are all related to a north side library presence. An email from a customer about the library site with Pam's response is included.

Statistics: The regular statistic sheet is in the packet. It shows the end of the year figures. The performance measures format for 2007 has the same information. This is the measurement form that we will be reporting on as a result of the budget documents. These are standard performance measurements in library industry. They are interesting because we are including per capita measurements. This gives us a good picture of our business and how effective we are.

Some information is over and above the national information that we report. We reviewed other states and entities and how and what they report. Cost per items circulated, is the number of items checked out or renewed divided by our total library operating budget, tell us how much it costs to check out an item. Turnover, the total circulation divided by the number of materials in the collection, tells us how many times an item is turning over on average during the year. We hadn't collected the volunteer hours by the time the report was completed for the budget, but Pam said the Friends reported in 2006 we had 9,625 volunteer hours. Using the national average wage, it is \$173,635 worth of volunteer time given to the library.

Bellingham Public Library is one of the top 5 in the nation for communities its size in circulation per capita. Circulation is 16.4 per capita. The Washington State average is 10.9, and the national average is 7.1.

Strategic Planning: Myron Carlson and Lizz Roberts are prioritizing the various items in the BOLA report. They are also talking about what the Facilities Department might accomplish. They will set up a

meeting with Pam and Dick McKinley, Public Works Director, to talk a little more about what Facilities may do or what can be put into a bond measure. They will recommend combining a few things and dropping a few things. It looks like Facilities will be able to do \$75,000 to \$85,000 of the work. That would leave \$2,000,000 for a bond issue. Most of the work is extensive and cannot be done through Facilities' budget. Myron said adjusting some of the priorities is to get a good outer envelope for well into the future. It would involve getting the windows sealed up, stucco repair, and gutters. Pam said they will come back to the Board with something more concrete after meeting with Dick.

City Council Presentation Outcome: David said the City Council made an excellent decision in giving us the green light to proceed using the library block for construction of the new library building.

Pam will meet with Therese Holm, Finance Director, to talk about funding options. Therese is putting together a worksheet for the Board of various options. Pam would like to have Therese come to a Library Board meeting very soon to talk about funding options. It is also important to have an education session fairly soon for the Board and the staff on campaign dos and don'ts. John Watts suggested the Municipal Research Services Center and Association of Washington Cities are very helpful with information. Those organizations are available for assistance.

Stan Snapp, Parks Board Member, commented on the Greenways levy. Until there is an official document, people are free to say anything. The cut-off is when the Board puts together a package and City Council declares it will go on a ballot for the voters. The campaign goes forward, but staff and Board members cannot be involved after that time. John commented that City facilities or materials cannot be used for the campaign.

Pam reviewed of the planning elements that the board will be involved with, many of them concurrently. We need to plan our interim library services for when we move out of this building. Other elements: the building process itself, financing, parking issue, Fairhaven element of the bond, the North side issue, possible tenants of spaces in the new library such as the Literacy Council or coffee shop, bond campaign, building program statement that we issue with our RFP for architects, communications element including opportunities for public involvement, materials collection for a new facility, staffing plan, private fundraising including opportunity for public named gifts, operating budget, FF&E (furniture, fixtures and equipment), technology considerations, and various phases with design development (bid document, construction document, going out to bid, value engineering with successful bidder, construction, demolition, moving out, moving in and grand opening.

David said to accomplish the goals the Board needs to draw a critical sequential path from today to the day we open the door of the new library. Then we need to assign times and dates to the critical path. This should become part of our packet every month. We can add or make changes as necessary. There may not be time for strategic planning at all the regular meetings, so David asked the Board if they were willing to invest the time to add a special meeting each month for the strategic planning. Faye and Vicky agreed the Board must do that. J. said he had limited time during the day and suggested evening meetings.

John Watts said he was flexible and supportive. There are four key things to any project: staff to put together the information, scope, budget and schedule. Putting these together you have the scheme of things in a time sequence, a PERT chart. It's important to start this on the right foot, so there is not a lot of duplication of effort. John would like to see the Board get some outstanding assistance in putting this together. Public works can help identify the people and the expertise needed, the bidding process and strategies. The Board should apprise themselves of the right techniques and methodology and get the right expertise in place early. That will pay dividends down the line. They will get it right the first time. They won't build expectations that are unrealistic, and there will be consistency of thought and direction the community can buy into as well. John said it could be as simple as going to an architect firm for conceptual planning.

David observed it would pay large dividends to call up someone who has just gone through this process. Ask them what worked and what didn't. Another good way to proceed would be to start our critical path, beginning our outline. Then at some point bring back in the Bellingham Planning Group to talk about getting the project from thought to construction stage. We would be talking to people experienced with the project and to local people.

Pam mentioned the Bellingham Planning Group worked with us with on our preliminary building program statement. It's an excellent idea to include them and other local expertise. There are outstanding firms in the country who specialize in libraries. Libraries are different. Pam highly recommends that we have on board at some point one of the firms that does outstanding jobs with libraries. David said it would be a wonderful thing to have both a local and national group working on the project. As Vicky said, we should build a building that no one would want to demolish. That should be our marching orders.

John said that fits into the LEEDS environmental management. Look at what is unique about this area that would make it uniquely northwest in nature.

Pam remarked that John had just visited the Alameda Library which had walls that were insulated with shredded denim. It is a unique thing for us to do as a library -- highlight those green principles and educate the community. John said the City has said we are going to lead the way with LEEDS.

J. Gordon said that recycling a lot of materials from this building, there are some creative things than can be done to capture some of those points. J. asked whether the Council, Board or Public Works makes the selection of an architect. John said the Library Board makes the selection, and the Council ratifies that selection. The key is to get the right advice on the right approach so the groups that are going to weigh in on it are on the same page. It needs to come together with a cohesive approach from the beginning.

David said we need an outlined sequence on paper. Once we see a critical path, we can add to it and ask for advice from experts. He suggests interviewing the Bellingham Planning Group to see if they have any collective information on how to take something from a thought to opening day. Ask them for a recommendation on how to proceed.

John said the Board needs to give them input on our expectations. We know the rudiments, but we need a professionally prepared document. David added this would be a verbal interview, and we would pay them for their expertise. We need expert help to get started on our critical path.

Faye and Vicky agreed we should do this and schedule them at our next meeting in a couple of weeks. Pam suggested an evening meeting would allow the public to attend. It is important to make our meetings as transparent as possible.

J. Gordon said there needs to be some significant dialog going on with the County and the Parking Commission. David wanted to charge John with carrying though with the excellent pieces he wrote on the responsibility of civic leaders to do the right thing by the community with a far looking view. It is not the Library Board members' responsibility, but our responsibility collectively as a community to not allow anyone to build this same building on this block just a little bit larger.

John said he will do what he can. He has put the issue in front of the Parking commission for their next meeting. He has asked them to come up with some ideas to present to Council. John said he will pursue the matter with the Mayor and Public Works Director. The library needs to define its own needs in space requirements. When the Library comes to terms with that, it becomes much easier to add options to a broader base.

J. Gordon said there are some things the Board can accomplish. John said he could see the board splitting up some tasks such as financing (campaign for a bond issue, Fairhaven, and the North end), scoping for the facility (design aspect, space needs, and overall management), and community outreach, which

overlaps the other two tasks with meeting room space, internet facilities, and design. J. said we want to get an overall handle on some objectives and ideas.

David said the Board has a collective clear vision of what we want to accomplish on this block. We will have a collective vision on what we are trying to do in Fairhaven by prioritizing the engineering report and decide how much and how soon to spend to bring that up to the condition that we should as a community. A clearer vision for the third leg, the North side, is needed. John said that should be part of the community outreach. The presence needs to be defined and sell it to the community. David added we need to decide what we want to do, where would be a good place, and what would be sustainable. John suggested the partnership with WCC might be a real breakthrough. It can be an interim project until we are able to establish a more permanent presence. The study gave long term recommendations. Faye said we also need to think about the interim place the library will be located. Part of the solution could be to try out a presence in the north side during this interim time.

David said we should define the word presence and the word north. John suggested east of I-5 and north of Whatcom Creek. J. said Barkley doesn't seem to be very north. Pam said we do have a presence in Barkley with the Hagggen's drop off. One of the reasons we looked at Barkley was the offer from Stowe Talbot. The advice we received from the Planning Department was that Cordata/Guide Meridian was the faster growing area. The Board determined that "north" was the Cordata/Guide Meridian area. David suggested a library presence very close to outside of Cordata. People would find it more accessible. Maybe the traffic experts could tell us we have transportation system that would bring us close, west or south, but yet not suffer the Guide Meridian traffic pains. Does it make sense to consider a place in the north where we could store the collection during the interim?

It will be two years before the move. It may be a little early to look for interim sites, but not too early to think about it. Pam shared a suggestion that was given to her, that we seek out a developer who might be building a big office building in the Cordata area. We would guarantee them occupancy of a floor or two for the first couple of years while they are getting their business in order, and we would move the entire library operations out to the north side. A presence downtown would be necessary for those unable to get to Cordata easily. David said Whatcom Transit would be utilized more often in the future as the price of fuel goes up. We should include the Whatcom Transit folks in our planning. We need to tie it in with Transit, and maybe they could run a loop for our customers. Transit already has a presence in the north end that would be easy to loop into.

Vicky suggested a top priority would be to get a number of places where we could have secure drop offs and lockers for pick up of holds. Examples such as a fire station, the Firs, in different parts of town. A lot of people just want to pick up their holds, drop off the books, and get on their way. We could call and ask if certain places could donate space to the library for a couple of years. Pam said that was just the kind of presence we were talking about doing with the north side as a graduated step to a future branch in five years or so. Vicky would like to say to the public before we take this building down that their needs will be met.

J. Gordon asked if there is a possibility of trying to jump start that process now for the north end. We could find out how it works and be able to make adjustments if needed. Pam said this kind of jump start has been recommended in the study. We will try some sort of presence, pilot it, and see how it goes. The Madrona Clinic and Co-op were suggested. David suggested a request for proposals to ask for a free space for a library presence.

J. Gordon asked how to reach the North end Neighborhood Community. Linda Langey said the board is made up of eleven members. She would like to have the library speak to either their board or in a community-wide meeting. They have a big data base and can spread information quickly. Pam said Lizz is responsible for Outreach and Branch Services. She can be in touch with the community.

Pam reviewed the topics if the Board has a special meeting. They are interested in having the Bellingham Planning Group attend to talk about our critical path and next steps, and what they might recommend. The Board is also interested in having Therese Holm speak about funding alternatives, and an education session on campaign dos and don'ts.

David said the Board needs to start a conversation about the definition of what a library presence is on the north side. Ask Clark William, Traffic Engineer, where we could put a library presence that would be easily accessed. David asked if there was any sentiment or justification for buying, building or leasing a branch library on the north end of town.

John answered that it was premature to talk about buying land or building. We are talking about two things: an expanded library presence that could morph into something else better used at a future time as well as a temporary situation to relocate our collection during construction. These are two things that happen to come together, but what we do for the interim doesn't have to be the solution we live with forever. That would be artificially rushing our schedule.

Faye said that is why we should talk with the neighborhood association about options. Is there a community building that has a space they would be willing to donate for library ins and outs for a few years.

David said it would be a great way to see how a presence would work, if the library presence was a storefront and had a bank of computers, a periodical room, and minimal staff. We should bring forward the idea of doing something like that. We should figure out the costs and if it's sustainable.

Faye envisions a place where patrons can drop off and pick up materials. Limit it to just that. Down the road you might want to add more. We could afford to do it if we found the right space where there is parking and reasonable cost. Vicky added that it doesn't have to have a lot of parking because you would only be there for drop offs and pick ups.

John suggested asking Linda to talk to the Neighborhood Association to bring their ideas back to the Board. Linda clarified that the Board is looking for a storefront that could have lockers and drop off as a minimum. We are also looking for a place to deposit our collection during the interim and possibly computer access. John suggested it would be useful to find out where the City's fiber optic capability goes.

David said in looking at long range planning for a north side branch, we need to determine what it is now and how to get it started. We may need to start with something small, and build our way into it with population and dollars.

J. Gordon asked if the library is a normal city facility that is used as a public gathering space, and does the meeting part of the equation is something that needs to be addressed on the north side. John said they had some nice meeting spaces. Linda added that if you don't live in the developments, you would have to be sponsored because of liability and cleaning concerns. The Cordata civic center is the Birchwood Presbyterian Church. It is heavily used for public meetings.

A Strategic Planning Meeting date was set for February 6th at 6:30 p.m. in the Library Lecture Room. Pam will see if the Bellingham Planning Group is available. Inviting Therese Holm and Joan Hoisington are also possibilities. Linda may be able to report from the Cordata/Meridian Neighborhood meeting.

Reports: Vicky thanked everyone involved in the wonderful jazz project film and concert. It was absolutely delightful. The next evenings are February 16 and 17.

John said Pam and the Board did themselves proud at the City Council meeting last night. The Council was delighted, and they recognize there is a lot of work to do. The Parking Commission will look at the

parking issue. John offered that he would be pleased to make available space on the Parking Capital Projects Real Estate Committee for periodic reports from the Board when the Board has had sufficient time for additional information generated and a course of action plotted. It would be whatever the Board thinks make sense to share with the Council. It would make sense to plan some periodic communication. John will make the same request to the Parking Commission as well. David added if we keep the Council informed, the community will be informed.

Pam reported staff has a March 1st target for the annual report. It will be another piece of information we can use to help educate the community.

The Mayor will be appointing Marilyn Mastor to the Library Board. She lives a little bit on the north side. She is on the Historic Design Review Board. One of the hesitations regarding some of the folks who applied was that they were on another city commission or board. This is a city board, but does not take up an inordinate amount of time. Marilyn is an interior designer, and she knows a lot of people in the community. She is very dedicated to the library. The Mayor will be asking for City Council approval on February 5th. There are applicants very interested in being on the Board. Maybe a key role could be to enlist their help in the campaign.

John suggested it would be worth talking to Patricia Decker. Pam said Patricia has put her in touch with the person who put together the design competition. Pam's concern is that it seems to be more for the architects than the community. We want to think carefully if we want to do something like that. J. Gordon added that it is a very expensive exercise and adds a lot of time to the process.

Next Special Board Meeting – February 6, 2007 will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – February 27, 2006 will begin at 2:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees