

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, January 20, 2009 - Meeting Room on lower level
02:00 PM - 03:35 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, Marilyn Mastor

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pam Kiesner; Christine Perkins; Donna Grasdock; and Gladys Fullford

Others: Jack Weiss, City Council Liaison, Sam Taylor, Bellingham Herald, Sue Hynes, Friends of Fairhaven Branch Library, Margaret Ziegler, John Servais

Called to order: Regular session was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Chair, David Edelstein.

Approve/modify agenda: No changes to the agenda.

Minutes approved: Faye Hill made the motion to approve the December 16, 2008 regular meeting minutes. Marilyn Mastor seconded. The motion carried.

J Gordon made the motion to approve the January 8, 2009 special board meeting minutes. Faye Hill seconded. The motion carried.

Claims approved: December 2008 general fund \$73,488.08; gift fund \$893.11. Vicky Marshall made the motion to approve the December 2008 claims. Faye Hill seconded. The motion carried.

Library performance & activity measures: Holdings are down 10% due to on-going weeding and replacement. Barkley Branch started mid September, and circulated 16,000 items. Whatcom Community College started September 2007, and circulation is low. We will be looking at WCC during the year to see if there is any way to increase circulation there. Total items circulated for 2008 was 1.4 million, up 10%. Total visits were up 9%, and website visits were up 15%. Meeting room rental revenue has decreased. If Fairhaven Branch is closed for renovations, revenues will be significantly lower. Lecture Room is booked almost every night. Faye Hill made the motion to approve the December performance & activity measures. Marilyn Mastor seconded. The motion carried.

Communications: None.

2008 Board review and 2009 calendar: Pam Kiesner reviewed the record of agenda items at Board meetings in 2008. It is a review of accomplishments and highlights. Pam asked the Board to look at the 2009 calendar to see if there is anything they would like to hear about. Faye Hill has asked to hear about how volunteers are used in the Library, and Pam hopes to have the Friends at a future meeting. The Board will hear about the new website and new Evanced reservation system next month. Vicky Marshall suggested switching the Board meeting at Barkley Branch to April, and have Scott Blume give the Children's services presentation at the May meeting in the Central Library to conserve on staff mileage.

Fairhaven Branch Library: Christine Perkins passed out the estimate summary for Fairhaven Library. David Edelstein, Faye Hill, Jack Weiss and Pam Kiesner participated in the Fairhaven renovation meetings. There will be a public presentation on Thursday, February 5 in the Fireplace Room from 4:00-6:00 p.m. Brad Cornwell, architect for RMC, who is working with FFA, Fletcher Farr Ayotte Inc,

will walk through structural repairs and renovation opportunities. The Fairhaven renovation project update will be presented to City Council January 26.

FFA took up the work where the BOLA Condition Assessment left off, and defined the level of safety to achieve in the seismic upgrade. A life safety level means all occupants would exit safely after a seismic event. There is a lot more structural rehabilitation than anticipated. The bottom line is higher than anticipated: \$3.3 million. There is \$2.3 million in the budget. The City Council put aside \$640,000 for the Central Library in 2009. The Board is being asked to consider asking the Council if they would be willing to allocate the Central money to the Fairhaven renovation project in order to complete Fairhaven.

One option is to only do the exterior. Another option would be to do the project in two phases. Incremental costs would be 20 to 30% more since some tasks would be duplicated. According to David Edelstein, it would be a far more user- friendly building to do the complete project. The architects will do a second round of cost estimates. They believe the costs will come down, and the bidding climate is favorable.

Vicky Marshall asked about grant funding and economic stimulus opportunities. Pam Kiesner said payments would have to be made first, and any grant funding would likely be reimbursements. David Edelstein added if we receive grant or stimulus money it would not be necessary to reallocate the Central Library funds to the Fairhaven project. Jack Weiss said the money is financed through general fund reserves. If not used, it will stay in reserves. If used, it may be reimbursed through a bond in the future.

David Edelstein observed that it would not be wise to pare down the Fairhaven renovation project. Any paring down would eliminate the details that would make it a user friendly building. Jack Weiss asked if the options are: postponing Central Library repairs, phasing the Fairhaven exterior work and paring down components. David replied that the options were to potentially shift the money from the Central Library to the Fairhaven renovation to make the project go and put it out to bid, or to just do the stucco and seismic repairs. There could be some damage to the inside.

The project is on the agenda for the City Council meeting on January 26. The public meeting is on February 5. We hope to go to bid in March. FFA has been working on preliminary bid documents and will have revised cost estimates at a February 18 renovation committee meeting.

Differences in cost estimates were explained. BOLA was hired in 2006 for a condition assessment of Fairhaven Branch. The plan included exterior repair and renovation by replacing the stucco and a seismic upgrade. FFA started where BOLA left off with more comprehensive testing and investigating of a seismic upgrade.

Pam Kiesner said the draft Agenda Bill for the City Council meeting states Myron Carlson, Brad Cornwell, and Pam will present an update on the cost estimate for the Fairhaven Branch repairs and renovations, and the Library Board is recommending the Council consider shifting some of the \$640,000 budgeted for the Central Library to the Fairhaven renovation.

Vicky Marshall said we need to do the Fairhaven project right and honor the historic building. It is opportunity to do it as it should be done.

Jack Weiss said we need to understand and assess the wants and needs of each project. Some work needs to be done on the Central Library now. Jack would like to see stimulus money used, but assume we won't get it. If it comes through, good!

J. Gordon was in general agreement. The doors of the Central Library need to be done now for security and safety. J. would like to see the Fairhaven project done.

Faye Hill would definitely like to see the Fairhaven project go forward. She hopes to do it in one phase because of the extra money it would cost to do it in two phases. It is fine to shift the Central Library money to Fairhaven.

Marilyn Mastor is also in agreement. Marilyn would like to do it all. The doors at the Central Library are needed now. Marilyn would like to see about other funding. Move \$640,000 minus what we have to have for the Central Library.

Pam Kiesner is preparing a package to give to Dick Little, City Legislative Liaison. He will meet with ALA next week. A request has also been submitted to Washington Trust for Historic Preservation.

David Edelstein said we will ask the architects to further sharpen their pencils in cost estimates. It may be possible to rough plumb the restrooms and kitchen to be able to finish them later. We need to do a user-friendly project and increase the value of the building. It is clear we are limited financially, but we should see the project done as completely as possible.

Public comment: John Servais read his letter to the Board and City Council urging the Board to reduce the renovation to what is needed, to include the citizens in the planning and to get this project going quickly. John asks the City Council to nudge the Board to do the right things and stop the foot dragging, secrecy and the changing of the project goals.

David Edelstein responded that the process was not bogged down or confused. Finances are in place for exterior renovation. Stucco is pretty much all or nothing. We are working on the seismic upgrade with professional architects and engineers. FFA suggests value for money spent. Plans are not finalized or set in stone. Come to February 5 meeting and talk to the architect. There is no secrecy involved. This is a job for the public good.

Margaret Ziegler stated she attends Library Board meetings every month. The public is invited to attend these meetings and make comments. Fairhaven has been on the agenda. There has been open discussion; no secrecy. There is an opportunity for the public to speak. The Board is committed to Fairhaven Branch and the Central Library buildings.

David Edelstein mentioned that he has heard that there are rumors that the Library Board wants to close Fairhaven Branch. David wants to put that nonsense to bed.

Whatcom READs and Big Read update: Christine Perkins announced that Sherman Alexie will be at two public presentations at 1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. March 19 at WCC pavilion. Sherman will also appear at student meetings at Bellingham Technical College, WCC, WWU, and a high school. We have applied to the National Endowment for the Arts for grant funding for the second year of this program. Tobias Wolfe's novel, "Old School," was chosen from NEA's limited list of live authors. Tobias Wolfe once lived in Concrete. His book is about a New England prep school writing contest. We work closely with Chuck and Dee Robinson of Village Books on this project as well as partners in all libraries in Whatcom County.

Donna Graddock mentioned the monthly book discussion will be about Sherman Alexie's "The Absolute True Story of a Part-Time Indian," and will be at Fairhaven Branch tomorrow night.

User survey plans: Christine Perkins announced a user survey will be conducted in the next couple of weeks. This is a chance for users to provide input about our services and hours. The walk-in survey will be at Central, Fairhaven and Barkley. The survey will also be online. The Friends will help us administer the survey and provide candy as a thank you. Staff and volunteers will hand out the survey and elicit responses for the first week. The survey will be available for another two weeks. The survey will begin February 9.

David Edelstein suggested a bookmark with website information to give users who would rather fill out the form on line. Margaret Ziegler suggested doing a survey on opening day at the Farmer's Market.

Library Board member report: None

City Council Liaison report: Jack Weiss said it has been relatively slow the last month and a half.

Library Director's report: Pam Kiesner reported a Memorandum of Understanding has been written to give to Outreach facilities. It lays out our responsibilities and their responsibilities as well as the conditions under which the Library provides Outreach services. The document has been run through the City's Legal office. Outreach tasks are physically demanding. We need to streamline services in a way that doesn't hurt staff.

Pam Kiesner filled out a "I remember when" form after the memorial service for Barney Goltz, stating memories of Barney's work as a Library Trustee for his family.

Pam Kiesner passed out an article from the Wall Street Journal about folks flocking to libraries.

Christine Perkins is working with the new Community Food Co-op for a community drop box for book returns. They are in the process of custom building a drop box for the store. Christine is drafting a contract asking them to pay for the cost of our delivery driver, as Haggen does. When asked about using their Community room, Christine replied the Co-op has been busy with their opening, so we haven't pursued this further. The issue for the Library is finding the budget to staff additional story times.

Donna Grasdock mentioned that we still have Jammies & Stories at Fairhaven as well as Storytellers Guild and Teen and Tween Knit2gethers.

Thank you to Donna Grasdock for the treats today. Pam Kiesner explained we have cut the budget line for buying cookies for Board meetings. It was decided not to continue buying cookies, but that treats could be brought by Trustees at random.

Pam Kiesner will be meeting with David Webster about the Library's budget reduction plan.

Central Library sites will be discussed at the February meeting.

Pam Kiesner reported that the library will receive materials and staff training as a result of the successful state grant in partnership with Bellingham Schools.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – February 17, 2009 will begin at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees