

Special Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, May 18, 2010 - Library Lecture Room
06:22 PM - 07:54 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, J. Robert Gordon, Marilyn Mastor, Rachel Myers, Vice-Chairperson: Faye Hill

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pamela Kiesner and Christine Perkins

Others: Michael Lilliquist, City Council Liaison

Submitted By: Christine Perkins

David Edelstein opened the meeting at 6:22 p.m.

Pam reviewed the packet she sent to Library Board members and reminded them that Mauri Ingram of the Whatcom Community Foundation (WCF) attended the last Board meeting to share the pros and cons of establishing another fund at the WCF. Mauri specifically recommended choosing WCF or an independent Foundation and not having one of each because this is confusing to donors.

Pam showed the group the selected Mission and Purpose Statements and everyone agreed we needed a mission statement.

Michael suggested we consider mirroring the library's mission statement, which is:

Bellingham Public Library: sharing information, ideas and the joy of reading.

David asked the group to step back and ask, "Do we want a Foundation?" He believes that a Foundation would benefit the community in two ways:

By establishing an endowment to provide perpetual financial support for the library;
By providing individuals or families who want to direct funds to the library in their lifetime a place to do so, and a place for them to direct funds from estate plans.

David said WCF might be appropriate for a small project, while an independent Foundation may be preferable for a big project, especially since its Board would be fully focused on the needs of the Library. However, a separate Foundation would take more work.

Michael pointed out that Mauri said WCF would welcome a library fund advisory board. J said the advisory board advises – WCF would listen but isn't obligated to follow direction of advisory board.

Pam said that we have an endowment fund at WCF now, and in the past the Library Board has chosen to reinvest any interest income back into the endowment. She also noted that the public is currently able to donate money to the public library gift fund – which is earmarked for specific library projects at the direction of the donor. These gifts do not qualify for 501(c)(3) tax write-offs.

Rachel expressed concern about how the Foundation was going to raise money, and the need to make sure the Foundation's role differs from that of the Friends. She does not want to dilute either group's fundraising abilities or step on any toes.

Faye said that her discussions with WCLS trustees showed her the importance of Board, Friends, and Foundation working collaboratively.

Pam and Faye indicated that they feel the Friends would like to help support the Foundation but that they enjoy their book sale focus and would not be threatened by the efforts of a Foundation. Faye thinks there is a large untapped pool of potential donors who would support a Foundation but may not attend book sales. She said that giving to the Friends (via donations of used books or purchasing books at a sale) meets a different need for people than donations to a Foundation.

Marilyn said she believes the Friends have their own niche and is not concerned about a Foundation stepping on their toes.

David thinks that both groups could benefit each other -- for example, putting Foundation fliers in every used book sold at the Friends sale.

David said his vision is less fundraising and more estate planning.

J asked if the main point of the Foundation was the capital project.

After much discussion, the group agreed that the mission of the Foundation should be kept broad enough to cover several purposes which could change over the lifetime of the Foundation. Several expressed a preference for a mission similar to that of the Seattle Public Library, along the lines of "The Seattle Public Library Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation established to secure funding from the private sector to support The Seattle Public Library's programs, services, and facilities above and beyond what the traditional tax base provides."

Christine suggested that an unwritten purpose of the Foundation could be advocacy-- raising awareness of the need for a new building, advocating for it, and showing the public that steps are being made to secure private funding, and therefore this project is worthy of public (bond measure) support. Having a building project as a preliminary focus gives potential Foundation Board members an exciting reason to join the Foundation.

Michael, J and Rachel said that advocacy was an important reason to form a Foundation, and getting more people involved would be valuable.

Pam said we could have three or more funds within the Foundation – one for programs, one for services, and one for facilities (to follow the mission). The Board could initially put most energy into the one for facilities, but have the others available for people who prefer them.

Faye expressed concern about making the main focus be about a new building, since it could take years before it comes to fruition. Rachel said this was a problem for the Pickford.

David said in his view a Foundation spans generations, while a capital campaign spans 4 – 5 years.

J said mission statements can morph over the years after one goal has been accomplished. He doesn't recommend specifically mentioning a new building in the mission but does want to recruit board members with this vision.

The group discussed how much time and effort it would take to found a Foundation, and how staff time is limited due to staffing cuts. Pam said if the board voted to do it, she would find a way for it to happen. J said forming a Foundation is the only answer to moving forward on the Board's goals for new capital projects. Library board (and Foundation Board) members want to leave a personal legacy – that's why he joined the Board. It's what gets people inspired.

After discussion, the group decided that they preferred to found an independent Foundation rather than another fund at the WCF. There was some discussion of whether or not funds could be raised by the new Foundation and any money designated for an endowment would be then placed in the WCF Fund, with earnings to come back to the Library Foundation's general account. In this way, WCF would be the investment vehicle for some of the funds the Foundation raises. David said an alternative would be to have an investment committee on the Foundation to find the best rate for the money based on how soon it was going to be used.

J made a motion to develop a Bellingham Public Library Foundation.
Marilyn seconded it. All were in favor; motion carried.

J said he did not personally have extra time to commit to serving on the Foundation. Rachel said since she does fundraising and recruits Board members for her job at the Whatcom Literacy Council, she may have to excuse herself from this aspect of the Foundation. She said she would donate to the Foundation herself, and would ask personal friends (who she cannot recruit for her own Foundation due to conflict of interest) if they would like to participate in a Library Foundation. Rachel said she could provide information on how to establish a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Faye and Marilyn expressed interest in helping with a Library Foundation and will set up a meeting with Pam to discuss it further.

Pam encouraged everyone to mention to their friends and colleagues that we are starting a Library Foundation and ask if they are interested in helping.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees