

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, June 15, 2010 - Meeting Room on lower level
04:00 PM - 06:20 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: David Edelstein, Faye Hill, J. Gordon, Marilyn Mastor, and Rachel Myers

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pamela Kiesner; Christine Perkins; Beth Farley; Colleen Morse; Jane Lowrey; Shari Emley; Margaret Ziegler; and Gladys Fullford

Others: Michael Lilliquist, City Council Liaison, Kathie Wilson, BPL Friends President, Sam Taylor, Bellingham Herald, Melanie Sandoval, Pam Went, Claude Hill, Ruby Larive, Anita and Ray Ballweg, Jeanne Uhles, Dorothy Baldwin, R. Saldin, Ruth and Cliffe Baacke, Iris Kaneshige, Doreen Doris, Lynette Felber, Steven Newmark, Sue Hynes, Karin Gunderson, Lorna Klemanski, COB Human Resources Manager, Barbara H. Brandt, Andrew & Jerry Fenwick, David Marshak, Robert Layne, Sheri Ward, John Servais, Jan Rensink, Donna Davis, Richard Baldwin, and Howard Levitt.

Called to order: Regular session was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chair, David Edelstein.

Approve/modify agenda: No changes to agenda.

Public comment: Melanie Sandoval suggested it would be better for families to come to the library if we were open later. Melanie also suggested reducing magazine subscriptions, 50 cent use fee for all people on the ballot, and a donation box by the free materials.

Richard Baldwin said the library is important part of the community, arm in arm with education. It is imperative to find a way to fund schools and libraries. Richard suggested use fees for library cards with a discount for those who could not afford it. Pam Kiesner commented that by state law we cannot charge for basic library services. We could charge rent on best sellers with at least one free copy in the system. Richard said it was time the libraries got together and changed the law.

Karin Gunderson stated the Fairhaven library is social capital in the community. The library is used a lot. It has been expensively rehabilitated. Karin said she was shocked that the funding stream might close it. There has to be a way for the community to keep it open.

Steven Newmark heard a rumor the Fairhaven library is closing. Steven said it is not forward thinking to close the recently opened library branch. Other communities are maintaining their libraries. Look forward, not backward.

John Servais spoke and stated that he posts the Northwest Citizens blog. John read a letter from Stephanie Johnson, President, The Old Fairhaven Association, Board of Directors, requesting that Fairhaven not be closed. It is used and cherished by the young to the elderly. John said a 1992 study showed the cost effectiveness of branches being more efficient, greener, and environmentally friendly.

Donna Davis is a former teacher at Fairhaven Middle School. Donna said many students used the library after school and It would be criminal to close down an educational resource. Donna asked the Board to be responsible in keeping Fairhaven open.

Jan Rensink would like for the Fairhaven library to stay open.

Jane Lowrey, a 30-year library employee, said she is concerned as a citizen. Jane said she realizes that Fairhaven is a wonderful convenience, but the materials and service are available at Central. Cutting Outreach would leave patrons without any service.

David Marshak, WWU Professor, said he has seen heavy use of Fairhaven, and he has never been there when no other patrons were there. David stated Fairhaven serves a vital community function. Fairhaven is a progressive area and brings in revenue to Bellingham. David urges not to close Fairhaven.

David Edelstein explained the Bellingham Public Library is given a budget from City Administration that we must live within. The Mayor asked as an exercise to present for 2011 a proposal that is 95% of the 2010 budget inclusive of increases in wages, benefits, and payback allocations. This equals an 11% decrease. It is the Library Board's responsibility to consider facilities, employees, materials, and Outreach services.

Pam Kiesner answered a question that Library Board members are appointed to 5-year terms by the Mayor and are then approved by Council. They are a governing and policy-setting Board by State law. Funding is from the City's General Fund. Michael Lilliquist serves as City Council liaison to the Library Board.

Minutes approved: Faye Hill made the motion to approve the May 18, 2010 regular meeting minutes. Marilyn Mastor seconded. A correction was made that Faye Hill travelled to Massachusetts, not Maine. The motion carried.

Rachel Myers made the motion to approve the May 18, 2010 special meeting minutes. Faye Hill seconded. The motion carried.

Faye Hill made the motion to approve the June 8, 2010 special meeting minutes. Marilyn Mastor seconded. The motion carried.

Library performance & activity measures: Faye Hill made the motion to approve the May performance and activity measures. J. Gordon seconded. Total circulation is up 3%. Central is up 6.5%. Fairhaven Branch is down 30%. Barkley Branch is up almost 3%. Whatcom Community College is down 12%. Total visits are down 21%. The motion carried.

A comment from the audience was that the 21% reduction in patron visits might be the result of being closed on Sunday. Perhaps there could be a test of closing on a week day instead of weekend day to see if more people would utilize the services.

Communications: Letters and communications in a packet given to the Board are from Karin Gunderson regarding the Fairhaven Branch; Bob Currie, Fairhaven Branch; Travis Tomulty, Director of Recreation Therapy at St Francis of Bellingham, regarding Outreach Services; a follow-up letter from the residents of St Francis; Voice mail message from Jill Nelson, Activity Director at Shuksan Health Care; and notes from the suggestion box regarding Fairhaven, the library in general, and suggesting a donation box.

Financial reports: Claims: May 2010 general fund \$33,776.95; gift fund \$2,289.67. Marilyn Mastor made a motion to approve the May 2010 claims. Faye Hill seconded. Motion carried.

Library Board Member report: J. Gordon attend the PDA (Public Development Authority) meeting. Nothing significant relevant to the Library was discussed. J. and Pam attend these meetings regarding the Waterfront and the placeholder on Army Street for the new library.

City Council Liaison report: None.

Library Director: Pam Kiesner announced that staff member Suzanne Carlson-Prandini was selected as one of 50 in Washington State to receive a fellowship from IMLS: "Transforming Life After 50." This

is a full scholarship for training and course work regarding serving and engaging adults 50+. Suzanne currently works in Circulation and is in charge of the book club kit program.

2011 Budget: David Edelstein stated the Library Board feels the Bellingham Public Library is an essential service, not unlike Police and Fire Departments.

Pam Kiesner explained the library follows the City's budget cycle. Departments have been directed not to submit personnel requests that are not critical to ensure health and safety of citizens. She will submit our personnel budget by the due date of today, June 15.

Pam is scheduled to give a presentation to City Council on June 21. She will review the library's 2009 annual report and how we are doing after \$546,000 budget cuts in 2009-2010. She presented the following information for the Board: Staff was reduced 13% with 7 layoffs, materials reduced by 30%, open hours reduced by 24%, Outreach Service was reduced, no increases for librarians or administration, and two key supervisory positions were left unfilled.

How have patrons responded? Half of the two hundred Outreach patrons who lost service are coming to the library in group vans; half are not using the library. Thirty-six have signed up for Washington Talking Book & Braille program. Total people visiting is down 21%; this is probably related to reduced open hours. Computers remain in use almost 100% of time we are open. Providing computers for patrons to access resources is a basic library service.

The Library must turn in a proposed reduction plan for the 2011 budget by June 18. Pam reviewed a list of options. The Board agreed on the first three reduction options: eliminate vacant Head of Circulation Services and apply a portion of the salary to new Page Coordinator position, potential salary savings, and reduce librarian temporary labor for \$229,148.

Closing Fairhaven Branch involves layoffs, losing meeting room revenue, and keeping \$22,000 in the budget for utilities, cleaning and maintenance, leaving a balance of \$80,000 in savings. Fairhaven had a \$1.3 million rehabilitation consisting of waterproofing the building and replacing rotten beams last year. A seismic upgrade is still needed.

Implementing furlough days for all staff would save \$7,900 per day or \$39,500 for five days. The City does not endorse furloughs, and they must be negotiated with our unions.

When asked if these are short term or long term solutions, Michael Lilliquist said the revenue forecasts are grim. He would not count on the budget being restored the following year. Pam stated that the City is still looking for cuts that are sustainable, or long term.

John Servais commented on the Fairhaven Library having other uses. The Larrabee family estate deeded the property for a free public library in perpetuity.

Other options include foregoing a cost of living increase for Director and Assistant Director, reducing the materials budget, a furlough for Director and Assistant Director, Technical Services reductions, and eliminating Outreach Services. A question had been raised at the previous Board meeting whether the Outreach Services could be scaled back rather than eliminated. Pam said there is no easy way to scale back the services again. Volunteers cannot be used by the library because of union conflicts. It might be possible for another service provider not connected to the library to provide service to the nursing homes.

If computer hardware is reduced, we cannot implement a project that would increase efficiency.

The Board's sentiment is that Barkley is a good business partner. The facility is rent free. There is no cost except staff. The lease is in effect through February, 2012.

The Materials budget peaked in 2008 at 14.4% of the total budget. That has been reduced to 10% in 2010. Kathie Wilson, President of the Friends, stated the Friends would be happy to supplement the materials budget. They recently donated \$30,000 for children's books.

Michael Lilliquist talked about finding a philosophy of priorities. The City has studied moving to a different model of land use with urban villages. Branch libraries provide a broader community goal. J. Gordon said there is merit in having a new Central Library. Branch libraries depend on a healthy main library. Pam Kiesner said the Board has discussed that the next branch would be on the north side. However, we cannot support the operations of what we currently have, and our consultants advise not adding to the system until the population base reaches 100,000.

A member of the audience said people came to the Board meeting because of the fear of loss of the Fairhaven Library and asked if they should talk to the Mayor and City Council.

Faye Hill suggested in addition to the \$229,148, the Board's plan should include a five day furlough and emphatically asks for no backup plan, forego Administrative COLA, eliminate Outreach Services, reduce Technical Services and reduce materials by \$15,000. Marilyn Mastor added a backup plan without furloughs could be to reduce computer hardware and ILL loan service cuts.

David Edelstein said to not cut the materials budget. He does not want the Friends to feel they need to make up part of the materials budget which is a basic library responsibility.

Colleen Morse said Outreach Services is a basic service to the nursing homes. Colleen cannot believe the library would consider cutting Outreach. Reduce, but don't eliminate this service.

Further discussion followed and the suggestion was made to add a statement to the Mayor about how difficult this was, to study the furlough carefully, and that making this complete cut of Outreach Services is eliminating a 40 year library service. Faye Hill made the motion to reduce the budget by eliminating the vacant Head of Circulation Services position, potential salary savings, reducing librarian temporary labor, implementing 5-day furlough, forego administrative COLA, reduce materials budget by \$6,455, reduce Technical Services, and eliminate Outreach Services. Rachel Myers seconded. The motion carried with Marilyn Mastor abstaining.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – July 20, 2010 in the Library Lecture Room, Lower level - will begin at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees