

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, May 17, 2011 - Library Board Room
04:00 PM - 06:24 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, and Marilyn Mastor.

Board Members Absent: Rachel Myers

Library Staff: Pamela Kiesner; Christine Perkins; Madeline Sheplor; Bethany Hoglund; Jennifer Lovchik; Suzanne Carlson-Prandini and Wendy Jenkins.

Others: Stan Snapp, City Council Liaison, Jamie Amend, WCLS Board representative, Kathie Wilson, Friends of the Bellingham Public Library President.

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

Approve/modify agenda: No changes to agenda.

Public comment: Kathie Wilson, President of the Friends of Bellingham Public Library, announced the Ski-to-Sea book sale is coming up May 25 – 28. The Friends are hopeful this sale will boost this year's lower-than-usual donations.

Minutes: Marilyn Mastor moved to approve the April 19, 2011 Regular Board meeting minutes. Faye Hill seconded. No changes. Motion carried.

Communications and Courtesies: In the packet is a letter from Mauri Ingram, Whatcom Community Foundation President, thanking the Library for the two distribution checks that were reinvested back into the endowment fund.

Library performance & activity measures: Faye Hill moved to approve the April, 2011 performance & activity measures. Marilyn Mastor seconded. Circulation is up, visits down, continuing the trend resulting from our reduction in open hours. Stan asked what the "withdrawn from collection" items were. Pam answered those are the items that have been weeded out of the collection because they are worn out or out-of-date. Faye asked if we had considered adding to the performance measures the number of people doing computer work at the library. Madeline acknowledged we can add that to the report. Pam added that our computers are in use close to 99% of the time. Motion carried.

Financial reports: John Carter, Finance Director, presented an overview of city finances, with a focus on the General Fund. John began with a pie chart showing distribution of funds by department. Over 50% of the General Fund goes to police and fire; the highest priority for city government is public safety. The library budget is 6%. All departments, with the exception of police, have significantly reduced their budgets.

Next, John showed a line graph comparing revenues and expenses from 2001 to 2010. From 2005 to 2007, excess revenues were put into reserves. In 2008, revenues collapsed. 2011 is the fourth year in a row we have taken from the reserves to cover expenses. The net effect for the City is 60 positions that have been eliminated. John mentioned that though this is harsh, many cities across the nation did not have reserves to fall back on and are closing libraries and drastically cutting even police departments.

The next graph shows the rise and fall of sales tax from 2001 to 2010. John pointed out sales tax is confusing for many people. Out of the 8.7%, the city gets .85%. The majority goes to the state. The growth rate of sales tax for 2010 was 4%, up from the predicted 2%. There are about 100 different categories for sales tax. The general merchandisers category was up over 10% (in our area, in large part due to Canadian influence). The construction category was down 20%.

The business & occupation tax graph shows a peak in 2008 and dramatic drops in 2009 and 2010. The state collects about 3 times as much as the city does and has recalibrated how the money is distributed making it hard to measure current amounts with past years.

The real estate excise tax graph shows a peak in 2006 and significant drops each year thereafter. In 2006, the city issued 1000 new permits. In 2010, 84 were issued.

Some highlights of the Revenue Trend Dashboard for 2011:

- Sales tax is currently trending a 4.2% increase.
- B & O tax is trending at 6.5% increase, but slowing a bit.
- Real estate excise tax is trending down 22.3%.

The number of jobs in Whatcom County has been steadily decreasing since 2008. There is currently an increase in private sector jobs, but public sector jobs are still decreasing.

The last chart predicts the General Fund Reserve Ending Balance through 2014 using the assumptions that current revenue trends will continue and that expenses will remain stable (no new staff), but including increases in salary and benefits. We would drop below the 12% reserve target in 2012, and drop below the 6% minimum reserve sometime in 2013. Currently we do not have a sustainable model. Every revenue stream is dependent on construction. This trend will not end until construction begins to recover. There are many budget meetings scheduled to try to figure out the best way to proceed.

John also mentioned the bond we were issued for citywide energy conservation projects. The city is trying to mitigate the charges to the departments.

Claims: April, 2011 general fund \$43,975.35; gift fund \$5,602.49. Marilyn Mastor moved to approve the April claims. Faye Hill seconded. Pam pointed out the printing line item to WWU. She explained the city goes through a bidding process each year for print jobs. This year WWU/WCC Print Services won the contract. The city is currently rebidding for a new vendor. Motion carried.

Trustee education: Suzanne Carlson-Prandini, who is in charge of our Adult Summer Reading program, gave a brief introduction to this year's program - Novel Destinations. Patrons read or listen to a book, fill out a paper or online review and are then entered into a prize drawing (thanks to the Friends for funding this four years running!). This program provides patrons the opportunity to model and celebrate reading.

Jennifer Lovchik has organized our Teen Summer Reading program for 10 years. This year will be similar to past years in that teens read or listen, write a review (paper or online) and then are entered into weekly drawings (again funded by our Friends). One other element is that, after writing a review, teens are eligible for a one-time, up to \$5, fine forgiveness. Jennifer explained all teens seem to tally fines, they don't have jobs yet and don't usually come to the library with parents, so the fine forgiveness really helps them. Jennifer has some great programs planned such as a writing workshop with author Amber Kizer, another writing workshop with the opportunity to write a letter to their future selves, and gaming tournaments.

Bethany Hoglund, Head of Children's Services, presented an overview of Children's Services including this year's Summer Reading program:

- Since 2009, department staff was reduced by 60 hours.
- With Scott Blume's retirement, they were short another 40 hours and all departments pitched in to help cover the shortages.
- Head of Children's is now filled, the resulting openings for Programming Specialist and half-time Clerk 2 have now been back-filled.
- With a generous donation from the Friends, a clean, current, attractive collection has been created which staff now merchandise on a book store model.
- Circulation has increased dramatically since 2006 – in 2010, 540,000 items were circulated; so far in 2011, numbers are up 9.5% compared to last year.
- Tumblebooks, our online collection of animated, talking books, is heavily used by families as well as schools, offering computer literacy for kids in a safe place and format.
- The Early Reader collection has been relabeled and cataloged in accordance with Bellingham School District reading standards – a big help to parents.
- The Early Ed collection has been updated to a Parent Teacher Resources collection offering materials for parents and educators in a convenient location.
- Programming peaked in 2008; the number of programs has dropped with declining staff, but attendance has risen from 36.5 per program average in 2008 to 45.9 per program in 2011. We partner with the Whatcom Humane Society for Dog Day Afternoons, a popular read-to-a-dog program and with the Bellingham Storytellers Guild for Family Storytime.
- In 2010, 1050 children completed the Summer Reading challenge of reading 15 books – a 51% increase over 2009! The yard signs were a huge success – thanks to the Friends and to the many community partners who provided prizes.
- Summer Reading 2011 is "One World, Many Stories". This year children will be challenged to read 15 hours (20 minutes a day). Children who complete the challenge will receive a mystery coupon from a community partner, a yard sign, an invitation to the Readers' Recognition Ceremony with Mayor Pike (Aug. 10) and a certificate for a free book from the Friends.
- Children's staff will be hosting class visits and presenting at school assemblies. This year they will provide a Summer Reading packet to every elementary age student.
- Kick-off party is Wednesday, June 22, at Mt. Baker Theatre. Harry and the Potters will be performing. The calendar is packed with programs: Children's Craft Fair, storytimes, movie matinees, game days, chess tournaments, a wildlife program, and a build a fairy house program.
- Upcoming projects and goals for Children's Services: establish check-in to cart procedure similar to the Adult department; put up picture book power walls with subjects like Pink & Sparkly and Things That Go; continue to expand program offerings increasing age-range and moving into non-traditional story times; continue the focus on early literacy; continue to be a vibrant lively place!

2012 Library Budget: In the packet, Pam provided a copy of the Budget Calendar so board members can see the items they will be asked to make decisions on and when.

There is also information about the citywide energy conservation projects John Carter referred to. Central Library will be getting upgrades to the HVAC system, lighting and controls improvements, and boiler improvements. Fairhaven Library will be getting water heater, lighting and control improvements. The city is trying to balance the cost of the equipment with the energy savings, but could still involve a chargeback to the library in the years ahead.

Capital requests are due to the city on May 27. Included on the capital request list is the cost to replace all of our patron internet terminals and also some staff terminals. Typically computers are not considered capital, but Pam wants the city to be aware of this significant cost (over \$60,000). This would be hard to absorb if we are asked to come in at a zero budget increase.

Another possible impact to the 2012 budget is the Barkley Branch lease expiration in 2012. Pam passed out a handout that Madeline Sheplor created illustrating Barkley's monthly checkouts, checkouts per year, checkouts per open hour, and the percentage of holds checked out. The Barkley company has graciously covered rent and all operating expenses. We, in turn, help Barkley market Barkley, increasing the foot traffic to the area. David Edelstein, Pam and Christine will be meeting with Jeff Kochman, the Barkley Company President, to discuss the options.

Security cameras are crossed off the budget request list because it is in Public Works budget for 2011. Building office space is included for 2012. Painting and carpeting are crossed off because, currently, only health and safety related improvements are being funded. Pam has put the project back in Public Works' hands. Faye questioned if perhaps these items should remain on the list so they are not forgotten.

Replace furnishings is on the list, we have many chairs that are ripped beyond repair. Pam is suggesting a systematic replacement fund.

Updated library signage is on the list including a sign for Barkley and way-finding signage for all locations.

Develop Community Connections is crossed off because we are currently implementing two connections (with WWU and BTC), absorbing the cost in the current budget.

New/replacement Central Library is also included.

Memorandum of Understanding Between Whatcom County Library System and Bellingham Public Library for the Operation and Maintenance of a Patron Messaging System: This is a housekeeping item that Joan Airola and Pam sign. The equipment for the patron messaging system is failing. WCLS oversees the system. BPL's use is about 40%, we will be charged back about \$5,000. Pam asked if this could come out of the technology replacement fund, but the city doesn't fund this small of a project out of that fund. Instead, we'll use our "Intergovernmental Services" line item.

2010 Washington Public Libraries Annual Report: Included in the packet is this required yearly report that Madeline puts together and submits to the state. It is not as readable as the Library's Annual Report, but is full of interesting and useful information.

Work session update: The proposed dates for meeting with Mauri Ingram of Whatcom Community Foundation will not work for everyone. We will look for another date after June 13. Pam suggested that trying to include both foundation planning and strategic planning at one meeting could be overwhelming. Separate meetings will be scheduled in late June.

Board members' report: Faye attended and enjoyed the WCLS Board meeting. Lizz Roberts showed photos and statistics from Snapshot Day: a day in the life of America's libraries. There was also a presentation on the census and how WCLS will use the information to plan for the future. Birch Bay's population increased 69.6% in 10 years. Nooksack had a 57.2% increase.

City Council liaison: Stan reported he is receiving numerous (over 200 so far) emails concerning the coal trains. The council is currently working on a recommendation. The Whatcom County Corp of Engineers is co-sponsoring a scoping session for people to contribute feedback.

Library Director's report: Pam reported the trespass for the person who started a fire outside the library was increased from 5 to 10 years.

And to end on a positive note, the library is the recipient of a donation of \$10,000 from the estate of Viola Kleindienst for the Fairhaven Branch. We have equipment and furnishing needs at Fairhaven that this will greatly help with.

Meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – June 21, 2011 in the Board Room at Central Library – at 4:00 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees