

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, June 18, 2013 - Meeting Room on lower level
03:30 PM - 06:50 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: Faye Hill, David Edelstein, J. Gordon, Marilyn Mastor and Rachel Myers

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pamela Kiesner; Bethany Hoglund; Alison Dickinson and Wendy Jenkins

Others: Kelli Linville, Mayor, Stan Snapp, City Council Liaison, Karen Hannah, Friends of Bellingham Public Library representative, Deb Lambert, WCLS Board representative, Lynn Barton, library patron

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Chair, Faye Hill.

Approve/modify agenda: No changes.

Public comment: Lynn Barton, a library patron, read a letter to the Board concerning free access to the library system's Community Rooms:

*As a Bellingham Public Library patron for nearly 20 years, I advocate that the library's Community Rooms be available under a **free-for-use** policy rather than its current **fee-for-use** policy.*

In a democracy, freedom of speech and the open exchange of information and ideas are best promoted when the general public knowingly has the ability to congregate in a free and safe environment. Our libraries are intentionally open, safe, interior public spaces so as to promote freedom of speech, access to information, and the open exchange of ideas, and historically, these spaces exist through our library's Community Rooms. However, since the Great Recession and the need to balance city and library budgets, the library's role has shifted to generating revenue rather than offering unfettered public access to its public spaces.

*Additional fees should not be levied upon the public to make the room available for **actual public use**. As it stands now, the Community Rooms are supported by tax dollars and yet are closed to the general public unless additional fees are paid to gain access!*

*This restriction is **not** good public policy. Maintaining fee-for-use perpetuates unfair and inequitable access, and discourages and disengages the general public's ability to congregate in the main interior public spaces supposedly made available through our local government.*

Under current practices, only an elite, willing or capable of paying additional fees, have actual access. And while the library system does have in place a system to promote free access, it is only free when the library decides the topic fits within its own self-defined mission. I consider this tactic another form of elitism... it offers free access if it agrees with the topic and is willing to decline the revenue otherwise generated. Is this fair? I think not. Our city's only-available interior public spaces should not be subject to availability based on revenue-generating criteria nor subject to free access based on subjective preferences.

Please note the city's City Council Chambers and the Mayor's Board Room are unavailable for general public use, although their departments and other government institutions, like the Port of Bellingham and Western Washington University, have access to these spaces and do not pay

fees-for-use. This begs the point, again: Where, then, can the general public congregate freely and with full access to engage in open, public discourse? At present, it's nowhere, but, it most certainly should exist and should return to exist within our public library's Community Rooms.

I ask you to please support free-for-use access.

Thank you for your time and effort in consideration of this matter,

Lynn Barton

Mayor Kelli Linville: Pam thanked the Mayor for coming and speaking with the Board about the Strategic Plan.

Mayor Kelli complimented the Board on the Strategic Plan, calling it thorough with a good process behind it, involving the community, Council, library patrons and others. She added that as we look forward to potentially building a new library we must look at operating costs as well as building costs. She stated she has been fairly protective of the library budget, trying not to cut it because she sees library service as essential. The Department Head Facilities Committee will be reporting soon on the current state and needs of city facilities. This building, Central Library, is in much better shape than many city buildings. Municipal Court needs much renovation, the Federal Building is under-utilized. This first year the City is looking at moving offices into the Federal building. This committee will continue, making ongoing recommendations. The City will work on what we have now before planning new buildings. When asked when facilities decisions would be made, Mayor Kelli answered before the 2014 budget is finalized. She wants to maximize use of public facilities. The committee is assessing what we have available and considering the best options for the public.

J. commented that the Board is looking at constructing a building that is more than a library, a multi-purpose building with more than one player, which makes sense in this economy and this community today. Mayor Kelli responded that that is what she is looking for, to get synergy between departments.

Pam explained that part of the Board's process has been looking over the list of reviewed sites and asked about the status of the Re-Store property, one of the Library Board's top four sites in 2007. Mayor Kelli answered that it is good to hear the Board is reviewing all sites and 600 W. Holly is scheduled to be surplussed or sold. The site needs appraisal and a second opinion, adding that the City probably shouldn't sell it right now.

Pam pointed out that co-location with another department or entity is one of our goals. Mayor Kelli suggested this be brought up at the Facilities Committee, the Board should decide who to partner with and also do it's due diligence in reviewing operating costs as well as building costs. She asked if the Library could do more with the Children's Museum – build up the services so that the need for space is clear.

Marilyn described the Vancouver, B.C. library which is 4 or 5 stories and built at an angle with retail shops through the center. The shops bring income in for the city and the place feels alive even when the library is closed. Mayor Kelli responded this is a terrific example of place-making and it is what she has in mind by filling up the Federal Building – people working and living downtown will cause other good things to follow. Pam added that with 800,000 people a year, the library is an economic driver.

Pam commented that the 2002 City Center Action plan listed a new library as the #1 priority, yet it was the one that didn't get done. The recent "My Downtown" survey received many unsolicited library comments. She asked Mayor Kelli where the library fits in with her vision for the new

Downtown planning beginning this year. Mayor Kelli answered that the recent Bellingham Herald article, in which the Mayor discussed the plan, was primarily focused on the waterfront. She added that the Library needs to stay downtown.

Rachel asked what the Board could do to be involved in the planning process. Mayor Kelli suggested be involved, talk co-locations, plug into the Downtown work groups to represent the Library's interest, don't make ideas all by yourselves – our vision needs to be articulated together.

Stan added that one of the things in the mix is that this is a solid building, it could be a re-purposed asset.

Pam added as a follow-up comment that she would be submitting a request for additional staff as part of the Payroll Requests due soon to Budget, outlining staff needs to restore open hours – the trustees hear about the lack of hours, patrons comment on the lack of hours and the survey voiced the need for more hours. Mayor Kelli agreed that there are not enough open hours.

Consent agenda: Rachel Myers moved to approve the May 21, 2013 minutes and the May 2013 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Marilyn Mastor seconded. Motion carried.

2014 budget: Payroll Requests are due July 3, 2013. Last year Pam requested an increase of 5 hours for Delivery Driver and also to correct the Temporary Clerk 2 position, making it 0.5 FTE with benefits like all of the other Clerk 2 positions. Neither request was approved. Now is the time to propose restoring lost open hours and the staffing required to do so. We have changed how we do things, using more technologies, introducing efficiencies, so it is not a matter of saying we need to restore all 12 lost positions. Pam is working with the staff who do the scheduling to determine what we need. The Payroll is due before the Board meets again. Pam asked how the Board would like her to proceed: send the proposal to board members and request feedback; call a Special Meeting to go over the requests; or proceed with a proposal and copy the Board. Stan asked if it would be a blanket request or have options. Pam responded she will prioritize the requests, such as to open Sunday we need this many staff, etc. It was suggested Pam submit the proposal and send to the Board as an FYI.

Pam is also preparing for the line item budget, though there is not direction from the City yet. After discussion the Board suggested Pam request 3% across the board for library materials plus an additional \$10,000 for books and \$15,000 for digital media.

Another critical request will be for computer hardware. Last year we were able to replace most public computers but our 2014 request was not approved at that time. This year we will again request funds to replace staff computers and self check-out computers to keep on track with the City's replacement schedule.

At the next board meeting we will review rates and fees, chargebacks, and the materials budget history.

The Board briefly discussed the idea of not charging for use of the Community Rooms. Pam commented that we have a precedent in eliminating fees for ILL postage and Children's fines on Children's cards. She added that one of our strategic goals under MEET concerns public discourse and using the library as a gathering place, maybe we are restricting use by charging when what we want to do is to encourage more use. WCLS does not charge for their Community Rooms. Marilyn asked about other libraries across the state. Pam guessed about 50% charge. The Parks department charges for their rooms – the parks are free, but the

buildings aren't. The revenue we make goes to the City's general fund. One trustee suggested we could go to the Council or Mayor and ask how they feel about taking it out of the budget. Faye asked how this would affect the staff. Pam answered that rooms are currently booked online, but it could increase staff time to monitor bookings and use. There will be further discussion on Rates and Fees at the July board meeting.

Strategic planning: No committee reports.

Promoting the plan: Pam and Faye attended the Lettered Streets Neighborhood Association meeting where Pam gave a simplified version of the Strategic Plan presented to City Council. Five City Council candidates were also in attendance. It was a great opportunity to talk about the library. It was suggested Pam and/or board members present at all of the neighborhood meetings. Rachel added that the Whatcom Community Foundation board would like Pam to come and share the plan.

Pam has been working on updating the Thomas Hacker Building Program.

Pam commented that WCC is planning a new building with a learning commons, including the campus library, in 2017. When originally proposed, the plan included a public library presence. Pam is unsure if this is still included in their plans, but has continued to express our interest.

Site criteria: Pam passed out copies of the site review dated 2009 which is the most recent list. At that time, the sites in red were recommended to be eliminated but the trustees took no action. In 2007, the top 4 sites were:

- Restore (600 W. Holly)
- Maritime Heritage Park area
- Current library site
- Municipal Court (3 blocks)

After the Board toured all sites, the current site was chosen and City Council at that time unanimously agreed with the concept of demolishing the current library building and constructing a replacement library on the current site.

Comments about the list included:

- Find out the availability of Flora & Grand
- Find out the availability of the remaining Museum block
- We need to look years ahead for expansion/contraction capabilities
- Consider building 3 stories with room to expand out rather than up as it is costly to add floors
- More floors means more staff
- If we co-locate with another entity we would need to consider their size requirements

The Board turned their attention to considering the Site Evaluation Criteria (included in the board packet). Changes suggested were:

- Add *Potential for co-location* as 1.a.
- Change 3.d. from *Proximity to WTA Bellingham Station* to read *Proximity to a bus line or to a "Go" line*
- Shorten 3.e. to read *Ease of pedestrian access*
- Add *usable* to 4.a. to read *Minimum site size of 65,000 usable square feet*
- Add *including parking* to 5.b. to read *Design and construction costs of site, including parking*
- Shorten 5.c. to *Operating costs of library*
- Add *Environmental impacts* as 6.e.

It was clarified that 5.d. *Philanthropic appeal of site* meant that the site is appealing to possible donors, that it has a story to tell and that 7.b. *Site could change or expand who uses the library* referred to, for example, that locating near a school would bring in more students.

It was noted that community space is expensive and planning with the city makes sense – it becomes the city's venue rather than the library's so it is not as big a budget hit to operate. During our planning process the stakeholders supported community space to create things. Our mission statement reads "Connecting our community with each other and the world" – spaces that are different sizes, shapes and with a variety of equipment are critical to our mission as a public library. Rachel added that there are organizations that want to work with the library for space, for example WCF would love to co-locate with other non-profits. Pam mentioned she had coffee with the new Director of Whatcom Literacy Council and they discussed sharing space.

Personnel update: Pam announced that Mandee Manes has been hired as the new Children's Specialist. She is known in the community, having worked for Bellingham Bay Gymnastics and Preschool and as an Early Literacy Specialist for Washington Reading Corps in the Ferndale School District. She is bilingual and highly qualified.

The Head of Circulation position has 52 applications. Pam and Bethany are doing the initial review of applications.

There were 6 candidates for the Assistant Director position. Prior to the interviews, 3 dropped out (took other jobs), 2 did not move forward after the Skype interviews and the final candidate withdrew. We will be reposting in July.

The Clerk 2 position is in process and will open to internal candidates soon.

Trustee education: Postponed until next meeting.

Policy review: The Rules of Conduct was updated as suggested at the last meeting: 9. has been changed to read "The Board reviews all trespasses five years and over." Rachel Myers moved to accept the policy as written. Marilyn Mastor seconded. Motion carried.

Board member's report: Faye attend the WCLS meeting where they were able to see drawings for the new Ferndale Library building, a nice well-lit plan.

City Council liaison report: No report.

Library Director's report: Pam will save report for next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 6: 50 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – July 16, 2013 at the Central Library, 210 Central Ave, Library Board Room – at 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees