

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, March 18, 2014 - Meeting Room on lower level
03:30 PM - 05:51 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: J. Gordon, Marilyn Mastor, Rachel Myers and Tom Barrett

Board Members Absent: Faye Hill

Library Staff: Pamela Kiesner and Wendy Jenkins

Others: Jack Weiss, City Council liaison, Karen Hannah, Friends of Bellingham Public Library representative, Fred Haslam, WCLS Board representative, James Erb, Assistant City Attorney

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:35 p.m. by Vice-Chair, J. Gordon.

Welcome new library trustee: The board welcomed Tom Barrett as the new library trustee and Pam presented him with a library logo mug and nametag. The Mayor appointed Tom for a five year term: March 10, 2014 - March 10, 2019. To be consistent with the other board positions, at the end of Tom's 5-year term we will adjust the term end to coincide with year end.

Approve/modify agenda: Pam requested that we move item #6, Trustee education, up to #5. Rachel Myers moved to approve the agenda as amended. Marilyn Mastor seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: Fred Haslam, WCLS board trustee, passed out copies of the 2013 WCLS Annual Report and extended an invitation to the April 12 Grand Opening of the South Whatcom Library, the new branch in Sudden Valley. He commented that it has been an exciting year – WCLS also completed a strategic plan – and that their board would like to get together with the BPL board. Pam added that the two boards are planning a joint training session, presented by the Washington State Library, as soon as all trustee vacancies are filled.

Karen Hannah commented that the Friends of the Library like to help facilitate joint projects between the two library systems, such as Raise a Reader. Rachel added that she has noticed an increased presence of a reading program in her pediatrician's office. The program she is referring to is Reach Out and Read and it is unclear how they acquire their books, which Rachel reported are in bad shape.

Trustee education: The powers and duties of a public library trustee were presented by James Erb, Assistant City Attorney. In the packet is a copy of RCW 27.12.210 pertaining to *Library Trustees, Organization, Bylaws, Powers and duties*. James explained that the RCW applies to a variety of types of libraries, such as rural or municipal. The library board is autonomous, with certain obligations under the RCW and bylaws (for instance, following Roberts Rules of Order), but the autonomy is limited by the library being a department of the City of Bellingham. The board is responsible for library property and controls the funds allotted by City Council, but the library has no bond authority separate from the City. Pam invited questions for James:

· If there is a bond issue to purchase land or build a library, what are the limits on trustee participation? James responded that there are rules to guide participation, for instance, the board could speak in the community, but cannot use city buildings or funds (such as paying for publications) to lobby for the bond. Information and facts can be available, but not promoted.

Typically, a separate committee is established. Pam added that this is what was done in 2007, a separate committee met off-site.

· If a trustee is contacted at home by a patron with a complaint, how should he or she respond? James answered the trustee should use their own discretion – if the conversation is escalating and the trustee feels threatened, hang up and report the call to law enforcement. There are policies and procedures in place that the board is responsible to follow. The trustee should note what the complaint was, what the response was, and communicate with the full board. The online board contact information is the library address, phone and email.

· The RCW specifies that trustees shall: (7) Lease or purchase land for library buildings; and (8) Lease, purchase, or erect an appropriate building or buildings for library purposes, and acquire such other property as may be needed therefor. How does this apply to us? James responded that Bellingham Public Library is a municipal library (there is only 1 other municipal library of comparable size in Washington – Everett) with finances determined by the City. Because our funding is provided by the City and because our bond authority is linked to the city, the library board can identify property or an opportunity, but must work with the Council and administration to build a new library. If the library received a large donation to the Foundation earmarked to build a library, then the board could build on its own.

· How do other libraries get funds? Pam answered that it depends on what kind of system they are, such as rural, regional, or inter-county rural. Seattle Public Library receives their funding from the city, but also has support from their Foundation. WCLS is a rural district and so has their own taxing authority. If Bellingham annexed to WCLS we would be another branch in the county system, or the two entities could become a regional system, or we could contract with WCLS for service. A recent push for municipal library district legislation was dropped. Another option is going out for an operating levy.

· If we received a large donation, could it be used to hire more staff or open more hours? James and Jack both think so. Pam added the Museum has received grants that fund staff, but as with any grant-funded project you need to decide if this is sustainable.

· If the library received a donation and bought property, who would own the property? James answered that the statute and charter conflict – Washington state statute says the library can own land, but the bottom line is it is a partnership between the board, administration and council.

Consent agenda: Marilyn Mastor moved to approve the February 18, 2014 minutes and the February 2014 performance and activity measures and financial report. Rachel Myers seconded. Motion carried. It was noted that the statistics for February were down – not unusual for the short month which includes President's Day closure and a couple of snow storms. Programming statistics increased due to a great turnout for Whatcom READS! programs.

Personnel update: Pam reported that Jenni Johnson has been selected for the full-time Library Clerk 2 position (opened when Suzanne Carlson-Prandini accepted the Librarian 1 position), so we now have a part-time Library Clerk 2 position open for recruitment. The Communications, Community Relations and Programming position has been classified as an E-team position (not union represented). This will be a management team position with a pay grade roughly equivalent to our Librarian 3 positions. We have submitted a Request to Fill to the Mayor. Upon approval, we can post the position. The pay grade is lower than the Assistant Director position that is being eliminated so we have requested the extra funding be applied to support the position in areas such as advertising, printing and professional services.

Included in the packet are two 2013 Staff Development spreadsheets: one illustrating how budget funds were spent and one listing all free-of-charge staff training. There were travel and registration funds left unspent from 2013, indicating that it is difficult to send staff to training when we are short-staffed. We were able to focus on Readers' Advisory, Youth Services and Collection Development training. This year we also have \$3,000 for staff development donated by the Friends; \$1,000 of that will go towards tuition assistance for staff who are working towards master's degrees in Library and Information Science.

Operations update: Whatcom READS! report: we had 920 people attend the Cheryl Strayed event at the Mount Baker Theatre, despite the school closures and icy roads. This event included a showing of the 35 quilts inspired by Cheryl's book, *Wild*. 125 people attended the interview the next day at the Cruise Terminal. We had 6 other programs with over 200 participants. All in all, it was a very successful program.

The book chosen for the 2015 Whatcom READS! is *The Boys in the Boat: nine Americans and their epic quest for gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics* by Daniel James Brown.

This is the first year we had a Kids and Teens Whatcom READS! We had over 850 people attend visits and presentations by Stephen Sheinkin, a well-known children's non-fiction writer.

In the packet is a Library Services Matrix for trustees to review in preparation for the 2015-2016 budget. This is a list of every service we provide. The Mayor has asked that we prioritize our services. It was suggested that a board committee could determine priorities so that a whole board meeting does not need to be devoted to it.

Whatcom Community Foundation: Year end statements for the four Bellingham Public Library Funds (non-endowed) are included in the packet. The four funds total almost \$78,000. The Capital account opened with \$74,202 and ending with \$72,550 due to service fees. This is a wake-up call that we need to be promoting these funds. Large donations have been distributed to the endowed fund. The non-endowed funds do not earn as much; they are intended to be spent, so the funds are kept liquid.

Tom questioned the difference between the Whatcom Community Foundation funds and the Gift Fund listed on the Claims expenditure spreadsheet in the board packet. The Gift Fund is for donations directly to the library from the Friends and individuals for immediate expenditures, such as materials, digital signage and strategic planning costs.

Strategic Planning: The Facilities Committee met, including Faye, J., Pam and David Edelstein, to develop a plan to move forward on site selection. Development activity is increasing in Bellingham and we need to be aware of, and prepared for, opportunities as they arise – some are short-lived.

The Sustainable Funding Committee is planning a meeting soon to discuss strengthening our partnership with community partners and the city administration. Rachel, Marilyn and Tom will attend, constituting a quorum. We will give public notice when the date is set.

Board member reports: Marilyn attended the Danny O'Flaherty Family Concert in the Dodson Room on February 22. Danny is a knowledgeable, entertaining, Irish folk singer who performed songs and stories about the world.

Tom noted that we are meeting at the Barkley Branch Library next month and requested we talk about the Barkley facility and future plans at that meeting. Pam will invite Jeff Kochman and Stowe Talbot, both from Barkley Company, to attend the meeting.

Rachel asked if it was possible to increase the quality of the books distributed with the Reach Out and Read program – some of the books are BPL withdrawn books. Karen Hannah added that the best donated children's books are set aside for Summer Reading prizes. The Raise a Reader program gives new books to new parents. She isn't sure how Reach Out and Read acquires books; it could be they pick up boxes of below-sale-quality books. Pam will share this issue with our Youth Services staff.

City Council liaison report: Jack reported that the City Center Master Plan is now published. This will be discussed at the Planning Commission hearing on March 27 at 7:00 p.m. There is a description of the library project in the plan. A separate document, an Implementation Plan, includes budget information and action steps.

Library Director's report: Pam reported the library has 3 items in the City Center implementation strategy: 1. update building plan statement; 2. select and purchase a site; and 3. build a new library. 1 and 2 are slated for 2014 and 2015, but there is no money associated with this. The 3rd item – build a new library – is slated for mid-term in the Master Plan which is 7 years out.

As mentioned earlier, the board will meet at Barkley Branch Library next month. Pam will extend an invitation to the Mayor for the May board meeting.

The management team will be attending a 12-hour (in 3 sessions) Project Management training presented by Claudia Levi, who is an independent consultant and trainer as well as a member of the business management faculty at Edmonds Community College. WCLS completed this training and helped arrange for BPL and other area libraries to receive the training which provides language and skills to work together as teams on projects, such as choosing a new ILS system. BPL applied for and received a State Library grant that will cover 75% of the cost of the training.

Meeting adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – April 15, 2014 at the Barkley Branch Library, 3111 Newmarket Street #103, Bellingham, Washington – at 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees