

Bellingham Public Library



Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees Tuesday, September 19, 2017 – Central Library 3:30 p.m.

Minutes of Actions and Decisions of the Library Board of 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, Rachel Myers, Rick Osen, and Jim McCabe

Board Member absent: Rebecca Craven

Library Staff: Nancy Kerr, Bethany Hogle, Janice Keller, Jennifer Vander Ploeg, Deborah Brewer, Suzanne Carlson-Prandini and Wendy Jenkins

Others Present: April Barker, City Council Liaison; Faye Hill, Friends of BPL

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

Approve/modify agenda: Rick Osen moved to approve the agenda. Rachel Myers seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: No comment.

Consent agenda: Jim emailed Wendy to clarify his trip report from the last meeting. He suggested rewording the last sentence to, "Jim recalled that on another Sister City visit in 2006 to Port Stephens, Australia, two Bellingham library staff, Bethany Hogle and Sandy Zell, were visiting at the same time." Wendy has adjusted the minutes. J. commented on the large number of withdrawals in August. Nancy offered to check the accuracy of the number (after the meeting Beth Farley confirmed the number is correct). J. also noticed that Central circulation numbers are slightly down, but both branches are up significantly, almost 40%. Jennifer added that, rather than a result of increased Saturday hours, this is due to very busy Wednesdays and Thursdays. Rick Osen moved to approve the August 15, 2017 Regular meeting minutes as amended and the August 2017 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Jim McCabe seconded. Motion carried.

Board member reports: Jim reported that September is National Preparedness Month and Bellingham Book Groups' September selection is on emergency preparedness – Ted Koppel's *Lights out*.

Rick requested that Nancy send J. copies of the documents reflecting the 2018 budget adjustments that were decided on at the meeting held by Rick, Nancy and Beth Farley, Head of Collections.

J. and Nancy met with the Mayor earlier today and brought her up to date on the Funding Study. J. also mentioned that he, Brian Heinrich and Nancy met yesterday to discuss the study progress.

Rachel praised the recommended reading lists featured in Bibliocommons.

City Council liaison report: April reported that the Arch of Healing and Reconciliation event was lovely. April informed the Council that Parks is discussing including making the Central Library Lottie Street entrance ADA accessible at the same time as installation of the Arch. Also being discussed is what to do with the broken fountain. Options include filling the fountain to create a stage, removing the fountain and having a flat space, or creating a play space. Nancy expressed that Library preference is to remove the fountain. April will request a meeting between Parks and the Library. Rachel added that an interactive area would be great. J. suggested putting it on next month's agenda for a formal discussion.

Council is also still working on affordable housing issues.

Friends of BPL report: Faye reported that tomorrow the Friends will be holding their first board meeting after the summer hiatus. Next week is the Fall Book Sale and they have lots of books. This will be the last sale for 2017.

Library Director's report: Nancy reviewed her report that is included in the board packet.

Concerning Narcan and libraries, April added that the Health Department offers Narcan kits free with insurance. The Board was supportive of Nancy talking with staff and exploring getting a couple of kits.

Jim pointed out that he visited the WLA Conference website and did not see Suzanne listed as a presenter, but he did see Janice's name listed. Nancy verified that Suzanne is presenting in place of Janice.

Sustainable Funding Consultant Study update: On September 13, a conference call was held between BERK Consulting, Nancy, J., Rick and Brian Heinrich. Nancy presented to the board the draft Situation Assessment PowerPoint that BERK forwarded to the committee following the conference call. Highlights of the draft PowerPoint include:

- Project Updates – Situation Assessment: BERK is finalizing a discussion draft Situation Assessment which will be provided to the Project Team by the end of the week; it will include:
 - Review of substantial programmatic and financial data to provide an overview of current administration, operations and programming, and financial position.
 - Key themes generated from informant interviews.
 - Peer Comparison and Models.
- Library Services – map of locations in Bellingham and surrounding area with population density as of 2017:

- BPL branch facilities are limited, but are located within high density areas of the city.
- Future annexations could create larger gaps in services related to physical facilities.
- Library Services – map of locations in Bellingham and surrounding area with poverty rates as of 2017:
 - There are some areas with a high density of people living in poverty that do not include a library facility of any kind.

The following points were summarized from informant interviews with:

- April Barker, BPL Council Liaison
- Christine Perkins, WCLS Executive Director
- Faye Hill, BPL Friends President
- Janice Keller and Bethany Hoglund, Management Team members
- Kelli Linville, City of Bellingham Mayor
- Marty Mulholland, IT Department Director
- Pam Kiesner, Former BPL Director
- Rick Sepler, Planning and Community Development Director
- Ted Carlson, Public Works Director
- Bellingham Public Library's Role:
 - BPL is unique because it is one of the only places in the community where anyone is welcome.
 - The Library is a recognized resource for information and a community gathering place.
 - The Library's role in the community is changing:
 - Social and community center
 - Destination
 - Contributor to livability and image
- Challenges
 - The Library is seen in isolation from other City services and lacks a clear champion.
 - Funding is the Library's greatest challenge. Being a part of the City's general fund means its funding is unpredictable and in direct competition with other essential services.
 - The Central Branch facility is outdated and inadequate.
 - There is inequitable access and provision of library services across the community.
 - There is some confusion in the community about Bellingham Public Library's independence from Whatcom County Library System.
 - User needs are quickly evolving, especially needs related to technology and flexible community meeting space.
- Benefits and Drawbacks of Remaining Independent
 - Local control is the primary benefit of remaining an independent system. Many informants thought that the Bellingham community has different values and service demands than in Whatcom County.
 - BPL is already engaged in cost-sharing practices with WCLS and many efficiencies have already been achieved. Informants also mentioned that this

- can cause confusion for community members; they don't understand that BPL is funded through city revenues.
 - To remain independent, BPL needs adequate and sustainable funding. Informants thought the public needs to be aware of the Library's needs and be a part of the conversation for funding opportunities.
- Hopes for the Study
 - Many informants hoped that this study would result in a clear direction or vision that the City could take to staff and community for input.
- Peer Review with Washington State peer libraries:
 - Circulation Turnover Rate: In a graph of peer libraries, the range of numbers for turnover rate (circulation divided by collection) was 1.95 to 6.65 – BPL is the highest at 6.65. Our collection is well-used and wearing out.
 - Facilities - Square Feet per Capita: with numbers ranging from 0.37 to 1.09, BPL is 0.67 – about mid-range, but this does not take into account the number of patrons using the facilities. Our square footage includes all meeting rooms.
 - Collection Expenditures divided by total circulation: with numbers ranging from \$0.26 to \$0.61, BPL is \$0.30 – very low on the scale.
- Original Organizational Models/options:
 - BERK's initial list of organizational models/options to consider included:
 1. Local levy dedicated to Bellingham Public Library
 2. Annexation to WCLS.
 3. Development of an expanded consortium agreement with WCLS.
 4. Maintenance of the status quo.
 - ✓ BERK identified that #3 is not practical/possible.
 - To maximize flexibility and comparability, options need to separate organizational model, level of service, and funding options.
- Refined Organizational Models/Options: this chart illustrates the focus of BERK's upcoming cost models. They plan to look at three levels of service: Status Quo; Enhanced Programming; and Enhanced Programming and Facilities. For each of the three levels, they will consider the cost of remaining independent and of annexing with WCLS.
- Next Steps:
 - Advance cost model and analyze future organizational models/options.
 - Review Options and Modeling Outputs with the Library Board (slated for October 17).
 - Develop draft and final Report.
 - Present to City Council (TBD).

It is J.'s hope that the final BERK report will be clear about what the cost to the tax payer is with each of the options. April expressed that there is community confusion about BPL and WCLS being separate entities and that the BERK report needs to show clearly what the costs and benefits are for each option so that we can communicate that. J. questioned what the improved levels of service are that are referred to under "Enhanced Programming" – this is something that needs our input. Jim added that in the same way our input is needed for the BPL part, WCLS also needs to be involved in their part. Rick suggested waiting to see what documents BERK submits to the committee and then determine if we need to have further conversation with BERK.

Library initiatives serving people experiencing homelessness: Suzanne explained that she and Deborah developed and implemented an outreach pilot project involving eight visits to the Lighthouse Drop-In Center over a period of six months. This project evolved from the knowledge that staff see our regular patrons, they recognize points of tension and points of disservice – if a patron does not have a physical address, they cannot get a library card, basically saying, "yes we see you here, but we do not see you as a participant." Their goal was to improve services to marginalized populations and to address key City initiatives and the Library's Strategic Plan goals. They wanted to create an opportunity that delivers the message that we do want to connect.

Deborah continued, explaining that this is part of a larger program – Project Homeless Connect – that has been going on for three years. Prior to their visits, they had preliminary conversations with Drop-In Center staff (challenging because of staff turnover) and determined they would measure the number of interactions. They took in bags of books and magazines (thanks to the Friends), branded pens, adult coloring pages, crayons, various flyers and SkillShare calendars. Offering food helped get patrons to come over to their table. Basically they set up and waited – at first it was a victory to get someone to talk with them.

Suzanne said the project was uncomfortable at times and exhilarating at others. They soon realized that out of all of the information they took with them, the most important resource was themselves. They got to know folks on a first name basis. The level of comfort and trust rose because they had showed up in their living room. Suzanne noticed that when she was able to greet patrons in the library by name, to interact and joke with them, other staff relaxed; it impacted everyone else in the building.

Deborah and Suzanne also previewed the training that staff will be receiving on Homelessness. They reported it is fabulous training and they are looking forward to facilitating the training sessions.

Janice distributed a handout developed for the City-Wide Homeless Coordination Committee that outlines Library Initiatives Serving People Experiencing Homelessness. Suzanne and Deborah will be presenting their pilot project at the next Committee meeting.

Nancy added that after staff have received the Homelessness training we will begin reviewing our Code of Conduct to see how it helps or hinders our patrons.

Safety & security requirements: Janice distributed a Safety and Security Requirements chart that has been developed by staff to implement safety and security initiatives and the Youth Safety Policy. It lists the various roles people fill at the library and whether or not that role will now require a background check and youth safety training. We now will require background checks for anyone who works in, or has access to, the building. Youth safety training will be required or preferred for most roles as well. Because the Board is in a leadership position, it was decided that it is important for trustees to have background checks as well. We will provide these forms and there is no cost involved.

Nancy added that we are also no longer allowing single staff members or volunteers to be alone in the building. Staff have been instructed to wait for someone else to arrive before opening a building. We will require the same of volunteers.

Whatcom READS! 2018: Janice passed out copies of the Whatcom READS! 2018 book – *Your Heart is a Muscle the Size of a Fist* by Sunil Yapa – with instructions to, "read it and pass it on." Janice also invited trustees to take a selfie while passing it on and post it on Twitter at #heartmusclefist.

New Business:

- For a future meeting: LOS for staffing

Action items for next two meetings:

- October 17 meeting with BERK Consulting
- Regular October meeting date to be determined
- Northside services
- Personnel Committee
- Fountain removal on back lawn

Meeting adjourned at 5:38 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – Tuesday, October 17, 2017 at the Central Library, Fireplace Room, 210 Central Avenue, Library Board Room – at 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST
Secretary, Library Board of Trustees