

Bellingham Public Library



Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees Thursday, October 26, 2017 – Fairhaven Branch Library 4:30 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, Rebecca Craven and Jim McCabe

Library Staff: Nancy Kerr, Bethany Hoglund, Janice Keller, Jon McConnel and Wendy Jenkins

Others Present: April Barker, City Council Liaison; Faye Hill, Friends of BPL; Brian Heinrich, City of Bellingham Deputy Administrator

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 4:34 p.m. by Chair, J. Gordon. Introductions were made and Jon McConnel was welcomed as the new Head of Digital Services. Jon received his MLIS from the University of Washington and became a project coordinator for TRI (Technology Resource Institute), which later became the Gates Learning Foundation. After completing a second master's in Geography, he went to work for Berk & Associates, prior to it becoming BERK Consulting. He has been a Reference Librarian for WCC and, for the past 3 ½ years, was the Integrated Library System Administrator for WCLS.

Approve/modify agenda: Rick Osen moved to approve the agenda. Rebecca Craven seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: No comment.

Consent agenda: Rachel pointed out the strong circulation numbers at Fairhaven and Barkley branches. Nancy added that Barkley is currently checking in more items than Fairhaven, which is remarkable considering the square footage. Rachel Myers moved to approve the September 19, 2017 Regular meeting minutes, the October 17, 2017 Special meeting minutes and the September 2017 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Jim McCabe seconded. Motion carried.

National Friends of Libraries Week, October 15-21, 2017: J. read *A Resolution Commending the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library* and then presented it along with the *Mayoral Proclamation* to Faye Hill, President of the Friends organization. J. added that the Friends level of commitment is truly outstanding.

Board member reports: Rachel reported on two items: 1) Whatcom Community Foundation recently received notice that a local couple, who had designated Bellingham Public Library as their beneficiary, have both passed away. They requested that their estate be used to set up an endowment fund. Annual disbursements will begin after three years and the funds must be used to augment, not replace, city funding. 2) Rachel visited Vancouver, Washington's public library and reported that it is a beautiful, smart, interactive, engaging, modern-day library. She thinks it is worth a field trip – it shows what is possible. Faye has also visited this library and was impressed with the large Friends area.

Jim attended the *Practical Tips for Difficult Homeless Patrons* training that staff are currently viewing in small groups. He reported that he learned a lot including that you can have a miniature horse as a service animal. He felt it was valuable to see what the staff deal with daily.

Jim also asked about changes to our meeting room policy. He has a friend who is a Tax Aide volunteer and the friend mentioned to Jim that the group was being redirected. Nancy confirmed that she and Janice have met with Tax Aide and communicated how much their service is appreciated but that there are safety concerns such as blocked stairwells and exits due to the volume of people using the service. Janice has arranged for Tax Aide to have the Lecture Room (rather than the vestibule) from 2:00-6:00 p.m. every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday during tax season and also to have the whole basement of Fairhaven on Mondays and Saturdays. Nancy and Janice also offered to help locate a more suitable place if this arrangement doesn't work for Tax Aide.

Rick reported that he and Brian Heinrich attended last week's All Staff meeting to update staff on the progress of the funding study. They provided information and answered questions.

City Council liaison report: April reported that Council is in the middle of looking at budget requests. She complimented Nancy on her presentation which offered great direction to Council and provided April with a better understanding of the benefit of developing Levels of Service (LOS).

Friends of BPL report: Faye announced that the Friends' Fall Sale brought in \$12,756. She also reminded the board that there will not be a December sale this year. The next sale will be January 24-27, 2018. Faye is being trained on how to process the book donations. She is amazed at the care and complexity that goes into this process.

Library Director's report:

- Water testing for lead and copper will be performed soon at our Fairhaven branch. As was the case for our Central branch, we will receive the results several weeks after the testing.
- Deborah and Suzanne are doing a wonderful job of coordinating small group trainings of *Practical Tips for Difficult Homeless Patrons*. Discussions on our Code of Conduct and how to apply our rules will follow after all have had the chance to attend this training. The goal is to get all staff on the same page so that we can apply the rules fairly and equitably.

- Staff from WCLS and BPL have finished viewing Integrated Library System (ILS) demonstrations from four vendors – Jon spearheaded the demonstrations. The committee agreed that there are products with significant advantages over our current product and it is worthwhile to go for an RFP. The question of how to fund a migration to a new product is the next step in determining a course of action.
- Nancy has had preliminary discussions about the broken fountain with the Mayor and Leslie Bryson, Parks & Recreation Director. Two options have been presented, either cover it with a platform or remove it to have a flat space. J. suggested that the Board make a recommendation as an elevated platform is a liability. Nancy will put this on November's agenda. April asked if the ADA walkway to the back door is still planned to happen with the Arch of Reconciliation. Nancy will be meeting with Lesley to confirm.
- The number of items checked out from the Children's department has gone up dramatically in the past few months, last month by almost 5,000 items. This increase is directly related to the Board's decision to designate donation funds to new children's materials.
- We have been approached by KTCS 9, the PBS station in Seattle, about participating in their Mister Rogers' Sweater Drive, which collects coats and sweaters for low-income participants. Janice, Bethany and Nancy are all enthusiastic about this program and expect to hold an event in February.
- The work on revising how and when we use our meeting rooms continues. While we have not changed our method of scheduling yet, we are making some changes that go in the direction that we feel is necessary for safe and equitable use of our spaces. You will see much less use of our rooms after hours, and more time allotted to library and library-partnered programs. Thank you to Janice and Donna for making progress in that area.
- The Board has compiled Level of Service documents for the areas of facilities (square footage), as well as hours of operation and collection size. The next area to be tackled is Staff FTE. This is important when we talk about our service to areas seen to be underserved currently, as well as future growth areas. There are many programs and services that can be provided to the northside and other areas with more staff, which do not necessarily require a permanent branch location or structure.
- As J. will only be on the Board until the end of the year, a recruitment process for a new trustee is underway. If you have suggestions of candidates you feel have the time and energy to devote to the Board, please let Nancy or Janice know.

BERK Consulting update: J. reported that he, Rick, Nancy and Brian held a 1½ hour conference call with Annie, from BERK. Rick walked the Board through the PowerPoint that they received from BERK earlier this afternoon:

- Defining Options: graph outline with two columns for governance, BPL and WCLS, and four tiers representing Baseline (where we are at now) and low, medium and high LOS.
- Cost Modeling Results: financial findings are presented in 2017 dollars and quantitatively assess user tax burden for each potential organizational model.
- Assumptions – BPL Remains Independent:
 - LOS: BPL Baseline
 - LOS: BPL Low/Minimal
 - Open hours: Main 56 hours per week; Branches 28 hours per week
 - Collection spending per Capita \$5

- LOS: BPL Medium/Operational
 - Open hours: Main 64 hours per week; Branches 36 hours per week
 - Collection spending per Capita \$7.50
- LOS: BPL High/Optimal
 - Open hours: Main 68 hours per week; Branches 40 hours per week
 - Collection spending per Capita \$10
- Assumptions – Annexation to WCLS: staffing cost would increase by 10% due to personnel transition and union renegotiations. The City will remain responsible for capital facilities, including maintenance. LOS would be determined by WCLS.
- Assumptions – BPL Operations Funding: continue being funded by the General Fund or a Levy Lid Lift that could increase the General Fund or provide for dedicated library funds.
- Six graphs are included in the PowerPoint under Comparing Options:
 - Total Cost
 - Costs to City
 - New Costs to City
 - Tax Burden
 - Tax Burden: Including City General and Library-specific Tax Rates (same as previous chart)
 - Tax Burden: without City General Fund contribution
- Comparing Options: Other Considerations
 - Maintaining local control gives the community more influence over its level of service and policies than it would have as part of WCLS.
 - BPL already participates in cost-sharing practices with WCLS and many efficiencies have already been achieved.
 - Facilities cost the City the same amount regardless of governance model because the City would remain responsible for funding them.

Discussion ensued concerning what information is critical to provide to Council and how the information should be presented. Points discussed included:

- Annexation is on the table because the City is exploring options that could offer relief to the General Fund, which is currently running at a deficit.
- The first question to answer is if annexation is a viable solution.
- If annexation isn't a viable solution, what other options are available to sustain or raise the level of services.
- Where does the Library fit in the City's priorities, taking into consideration all current needs and interests – this study sets the stage for that conversation.
- Which graphs display meaningful information?
- Concerning annexation, it is important to communicate:
 - The consultants found no significant cost savings for the tax payer, in fact the tax burden would increase, plus a vote would be required.
 - The City is responsible for facilities either way.
- Should the Board make a recommendation to the Council?
- Jon provided a WCLS perspective:
 - Annexation would not provide cost savings to WCLS.
 - Working together works well for patrons.
 - Having two separate systems sometimes confuses patrons.

- WCLS sometimes feels held back because of City funding issues (it is not fair to provide a service solely to County patrons).
- It would cost Bellingham tax payers more.
- April provided a Council perspective:
 - Bring the information to Council – provide the cost to the tax payer, and the impact on the General Fund, for each model – there are seven intelligent, rational Council members who have the responsibility to determine what is in the community's best interest.

Next steps will be for the project team to meet and also to arrange a conference call with BERK.

Items postponed until next meeting:

- Board Personnel Committee discussion
- 2018 Interlocal Agreements for Connections
- Trustee recruitment process

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – November 21, 2017 at the Central Library, 210 Central Avenue, Library Board Room – at 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees