

# Bellingham Public Library



**Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees  
Tuesday, February 19, 2019 – Central Library Lecture Room  
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.

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- Board Members Present:** Rick Osen, Rachel Myers, Rebecca Craven, Jim McCabe and Vernon Johnson
- Library Staff:** Rebecca Judd, Bethany Hoglund, Janice Keller and Wendy Jenkins
- Others Present:** April Barker, City Council Liaison; Faye Hill, Friends of BPL; Frances Posel, member of the public
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**Call to order and introductions:** Regular session was called to order at 3:32 p.m. by Chair, Rick Osen.

**Approve/modify agenda:** Rebecca Craven moved to approve the agenda. Jim McCabe seconded. Motion carried.

**Public comment:** No comments

**Consent agenda:** Rebecca Craven commented on the low performance statistics in January. Staff responded that this was due to the ILS change – a closed day for training and limited service for part of the month. Janice added that programming was also limited so that staff could focus on the migration to Polaris. Jim McCabe moved to approve the January 15, 2019 Regular meeting minutes, Special meeting minutes and the January 2019 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Rachel Myers seconded. Motion carried.

**Board Chair report:** Rick thanked Library staff for their hard work, including getting to work, during the recent lengthy weather event. The City was closed for one of the days, but the Library was up and running.

Rick informed everyone that there is a conference opportunity coming up – the Oregon and Washington Library Associations are holding a joint conference April 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> in Vancouver, Washington. Rick will email a conference link to trustees and he asked that they respond by March 1 if they are interested in attending. Rebecca Judd added that three Library staff will be attending.

**Board member reports:** Jim attended a conference recently in Vancouver. He visited a branch of the Fort Vancouver Regional Library System that has been housed at a mall for over 30 years. They pay a discounted rent for 3500 square feet of space. Changes in mall ownership results in changes – currently the branch is paying the same rent, but for one half of the original space.

**City Council Liaison report:** April reported that, with the extreme cold weather, the City opened the Maritime Heritage Park as a shelter until the weather crisis passed. Current emergency plans are focused on people that are housed, but without power – a clear plan for unhoused people is needed that specifies what the triggers are, where people go and for how long. There is also a push to have a county-wide plan. April hopes there is enough momentum and public sentiment to make policy changes. She also hopes this will rejuvenate the conversation as to where the city could place, and who they could partner with, a more permanent shelter.

Jim mentioned that he noticed, in an announcement, that the City's Emergency Operations Committee had met to make decisions during the extreme weather and he asked April if this committee had met very often. April responded that the committee, which consists of the Fire Chief, the Emergency Operations Manager, the City Council and the Mayor, only met to decide when to open and close the emergency shelters. This inclement weather emergency will inform future emergency preparations, such as how to locate and quickly train a large group of volunteers. Jim mentioned that they have used the Volunteer Mobilization Center in some of the drills in the past few years. April added how important it is to have a good relationship with the County and to coordinate with them.

April attended the Cordata Neighborhood Association meeting with Rebecca Judd. This group has been advocating for increased library service in the north side for many years, so expressed some frustration. Rebecca did a good job of explaining it is important to understand all of the options and everyone's needs.

**Friends of BPL report:** Faye thanked everyone for coming to the book sale – it was a great success, with about \$13,000 raised. The Friends received compliments on how clean and organized the books are. Faye added that now that she works in the back room, she knows how much work goes into pulling this off. Rick asked Faye to relay the Board's thanks for the contribution they make.

**Library Director report:** Rebecca reported the Library is getting back to normal routines after the cold. For the first time, the Central Library was designated as an essential service on Tuesday, February 12, when the weather was severe enough to close all City departments except for essential services. Rebecca expressed thanks to the staff who were able to walk, bus, and even ski to work. Also, the Emergency Day Center was activated, in the Lecture Room, for nine days – Rebecca thanked Janice and Suzanne Carlson-Prandini for being primary coordinators, along with Rebecca, during this process. We were able to provide a warm space for up to 40 women during the coldest spell. We will be debriefing with the City – this was a cross-department initiative involving Planning and Community Development, Facilities, the Mayor and others.

Whatcom READS is going full speed ahead with programs here and at Village Books. On March 7, author Timothy Egan will be at the Mount Baker Theatre and March 8 at Mount Baker High School.

**Whatcom Community Foundation:** Rick explained that each year the Library receives a disbursement from our endowment funds that are held at the Whatcom Community Foundation, along with a grant from the Bayview Fund. Last year, the Board voted to set the disbursement aside, in the Gift Fund, to build up a base for space planning purposes. The year before, the Board voted to dedicate the funds to materials. Rick suggested that we put the current disbursement into the Gift Fund for strategic planning and the facilities project (build up a furniture fund, which is not included in the facilities project). Jim requested clarification on the difference between the BPL Agency Endowment Fund and the BPL Designated Endowment Fund. Rachel responded that when the Endowment was started, the funds were received from the City – an agency. The Designated Fund is a companion fund with the donations received from individuals or organizations other than the City. Rebecca Craven moved that the disbursement be deposited into the Gift Fund for the purpose of strategic planning and the facilities project. Jim McCabe seconded. Rachel Myers abstained. Motion carried.

**Facilities Committee report:** Rick reiterated that the architectural, engineering, design and contract management RFQ was closed on February 12. Three responses were received, but the Purchasing Department ruled that one of them was non-responsive. The two firms that will go forward in the process are RMC Architects (Bellingham) and HKP Architects (Mt. Vernon). The Committee will be meeting early next week to discuss next steps.

**Strategic Planning:** Rachel expressed it was good to meet last month as a team and reviewed what the shared understanding of what success would look like for this project:

- Easy to tie to a work plan
- Be strategic and targeted
- Linked to City of Bellingham goals and strategic commitments
- Be proactive to City needs and changes
- Be Flexible – with the community at the heart, shaping the library's direction
- One goal is that the community reads and responds to the strategies, that it would be a living document rather than sitting on a shelf
- That it would have heart, the community feels like they belong
- Throughout the process, we would build Library advocates and partners

Rebecca Judd introduced a PowerPoint presentation she prepared on the Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) process (*See Attachment #1 for Strategic Planning Community Engagement PowerPoint. All attachments are located at the end of the minutes.*):

1. Rebecca explained she wanted to take, if not a deep dive, at least a springboard dive into the community conversation engagement model – what it is, what it isn't, what we might learn, and how that learning might inform our strategic planning process in a meaningful, impactful way.
2. To create this presentation, Rebecca pulled information from the community engagement toolkit that was developed by the American Library Association (ALA) for public libraries about five years ago.

3. LTC is a brand name for a broad-ranging set of tools that were developed to help libraries better connect with their communities.
4. This initiative was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and was developed by the ALA in partnership with the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, whose goal is to teach and coach people and organizations to solve pressing problems and change how communities work together.
5. The bedrock foundation of this community engagement model is the principle of "Turning Outward" – "taking steps to better understand communities; changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused; being proactive to community issues; and putting community aspirations first." This boils down to talking to people and basing decision on what we learn.
6. The tools are relatively straightforward. There's the short form "Ask Exercise" and the long form "Community Conversation." The Ask Exercise consists of four simple questions to ask people one-on-one. It can take anywhere from 5 to 30 minutes, in the form of a scheduled appointment or an on-the-street interview.
7. The Ask Exercise questions are
  - 1) What kind of community do you want to live in?
  - 2) Why is that important to you?
  - 3) How is that different from how you see things now?
  - 4) What are some of the things that need to happen to create that kind of change?
  - 5) Would you like to receive a summary of all our community conversations? If yes, please provide name and email.
8. Community Conversations are a series of 90-minute conversations with groups about what they want their community to be; what challenges they face in realizing these aspirations; and what changes are needed to overcome them. These conversations can help us to find partners and to develop strategies. Rebecca proposed we use these Conversations in two ways: at regularly scheduled meetings of particular groups (board meeting, FOBPL meeting); and hosting open (open to the public) and themed (early literacy, workforce development, small business, neighborhood associations) Conversations.
9. The toolkit describes this as a powerful way to get to know different parts of the community and to learn from voices not usually heard.
10. It's important to set clear, realistic expectations and ground rules – we promise to listen and to report the findings, but we can't commit to new programs or to specific action.
11. This model was developed for libraries, but it is about community aspirations. Information gathered that is relevant to other departments will be shared. The Community Conversation questions are:
  - 1) What kind of community do you want?
  - 2) Given what we just said, what are the two or three most important issues when it comes to the community?
  - 3) What concerns do you have about this issue? Why?
  - 4) How do the issues we're talking about affect you personally?
  - 5) When you think about these things, how do you feel about what's going on?
12. And:
  - 6) What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?
  - 7) When you think about what we've talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?

- 8) Thinking back over the conversation, what groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?
  - 9) If we came back together in six months or a year, what might you see that would tell you that the things we talked about tonight were starting to happen?
  - 10) Now that we've talked about this issue a bit, what questions do you have about it?
13. Each Conversation has a facilitator and a notetaker and each Conversation generates three sets of information:
- 1) Raw Conversation Notes
  - 2) Raw data organized into themes
  - 3) Themes organized into Community Narrative
14. At the end, our goal is the identification of key strategic directions that are informed by public knowledge plus expert knowledge.
15. The ALA website has many examples of putting this process into practice.
16. Questions or comments? Jim remarked that one of the things we liked about the North Vancouver strategic plan was the "in the next year or two you should expect to see..." which relates to Conversation question #9. Damani commented that, concerning the Community Conversations, when the meetings are announced it is going to be obvious that the Library is facilitating. Rebecca Judd responded that, as part of the introduction, it would be stated that developing a Library Strategic Plan is the reason for getting together, but that we want to find out what people think about their community in a broad sense.

Rebecca distributed a handout, *Community Engagement Outline*, (See Attachment #2. All attachments are located at the end of the minutes). The first section is Key Dates:

- Week of March 18, 2019: Community Conversation training for Library facilitators and notetakers.
- March 19, 2019 Board Meeting: Rick would like the Board to have a Special meeting after the March Regular meeting to participate in a Conversation as an audience. He asked Trustees to please schedule time to be available until 6:00 p.m. on that date.
- Mid-March to mid-June: Community Conversations and individual interviews underway.
- July 16, 2019 Board meeting: Final Community Conversations report presented to the Library Board.

The Committee has decided to bring in some targeted professional help. Kate Laughlin, Executive Director for Primary Source, is widely known in the state for library trainings and WLA Conference event planning and has expertise on the LTC method. Rebecca envisions Kate helping in the training, the theming meeting, writing the final report and presenting it to the Board.

There will be three styles of group meetings for the 90-minute Community Conversations:

1. Meetings with groups at groups' standing or board meetings.
2. Meetings with representatives of groups by invitation, by theme.
3. Meetings open to anyone, hosted at the library or elsewhere. Also for those who wish to participate in, but cannot attend a themed meeting to which they have been invited.

There will be two types of Ask interviews:

1. One-on-one interviews scheduled with key library stakeholders.
2. One-on-one interviews conducted at various locations targeting priority themes and audiences.

The Priority Themes section is a list of brainstormed concepts around which we can bring people together, from a variety of areas, for a targeted conversation. Additional suggested themes were:

- Downtown community, including the Downtown Partnership
- Public safety
- Equity, inclusion and diversity – should infuse all themes as audience, but also as a possible stand-alone theme
- Non-native English speakers
- Homelessness
- Mental health
- Disabilities
- Seniors, teens – should infuse all themes as audience, but also as a possible stand-alone theme
- Childcare
- Transportation

Rebecca commented that the final report is meant to be shared with others, but we need to protect the privacy of attendees. We will be conducting short interviews with all of the department heads and will share the final report with them.

**New Business:**

- No new business

**Action items for next meeting:**

- March Regular meeting will be followed by a Special meeting to hold a Board Community Conversation.

**Meeting adjourned** at 4:47 p.m.

**Next Regular Library Board Meeting – March 19, 2019** at the Central Library, 210 Central Avenue, Library Lecture Room – at 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees

**Attachments:**

- Attachment #1: Strategic Planning Community Engagement PowerPoint
- Attachment #2: Community Engagement Outline