

Bellingham Public Library



Special Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, March 19, 2019 – Central Library – Library Board Room
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: Rick Osen, Rachel Myers, Rebecca Craven, Jim McCabe and Vernon Johnson

Library Staff: Rebecca Judd, Beth Farley, Bethany Hoglund, Janice Keller, Jon McConnell, Jennifer Vander Ploeg, Katie Bray, Deborah Brewer, Suzanne Carlson-Prandini, Bernice Chang, Julie Mauermann and Wendy Jenkins

Call to order and introductions: Special session was called to order at 4:15 p.m. by Chair, Rick Osen.

Board Community Conversation: Rebecca Judd facilitated a Community Conversation.

What kind of community do you want to live in?

Friendly, welcoming, equitable, connected, healthy, vibrant, accessible, informed, place where there are opportunities, (like: educational, jobs, economic, recreation), housed, inclusive.

Why is that important to you?

- Feels like Bellingham is two Bellinghams: the beautiful “brochure Bellingham” that everyone wants to come to, then the “reality Bellingham”: lack of jobs, housing unaffordability, whole communities that are invisible. The shadow side of the hot commodity is the cost of living is high, impossible to buy a house. Bellingham is going to continue to grow due to Seattle/Vancouver corridor. Important to have items in #1 established so that as the city continues to grow, Bellingham stays or becomes what we want. Worried about the wealth gap.
- We need to keep an eye on the things we outlined. We have a lot of them already, but how do we sustain it and make it more so. And more accessible.
- Simply put, I like to be happy. If all the aspirations we listed were here, I would be happy.

- The difference between the “brochure Bellingham and the not-brochure Bellingham” is going to continue to broaden.
- Accessibility and opportunity are connected. Coming from a more populated area, an individual can make a bigger difference here. I'd like to see that increase. Everyone can contribute here. Individuals have an opportunity to make a difference in Bellingham.
- Sustainability. Population has more than doubled since I moved here. Small town feel is almost gone. How do we hold on to that when we are growing?

How is that different from how you see things now?

- I want to see a community that is not isolated and is in control of itself. We have to sort out how to do that amongst all these outside influences. How do we, as individuals, fit in to the big picture and know we are not alone with our problems. If we are conscious about issues, we can surmount some of them with awareness and intention.
- Some of the things we talked about in Question #1 are present, but there is a sense that we are losing the connection and friendliness and neighborliness that a small community nurtures. How do we nurture those things in a growing, changing community? People want to keep those connections. We are a small enough community that we can make a difference for each other, and that's exciting. We can know our leaders personally.
- Growth does threaten some of the small community feel. As new people arrive, you see their “fear of other” on sites like nextdoor.com which has the potential to overcome the friendly and connected aspects. It will take conscious effort to accentuate connectedness, particularly online, without killing the friendly and welcoming. Social media has pluses and minuses as a method for connecting. But if you are new, that may be all you are seeing.
- And that's across society; more and more people are connected through social media and not in person.
- LGBTQ community example: young demographic group, strong social media presence but people desperate for face-to-face connection. Changed strategy to host small events, and people have shown up.

What are some things that need to happen to create that kind of change?

- Self-conscious outreach. You have to make a conscious effort to connect. Keep strong neighborhoods. Our strong neighborhoods foster some of this connectness with block parties, neighborhood meetings, “Map your neighborhood.”
- Emphasize personal connection rather than digital connection.

- Equitable opportunity: helping each other learn more about ways to welcome other people, other cultures, other backgrounds, other life circumstances. Try not to simply replicate our own bubbles. Ask “who isn’t here?” Value differences, different points of view, diversity. It’s hard work; we’re all drawn to people like us.
- Major structural things might need to change: access to health care, access to housing, affordable healthcare/housing.
- More physical spaces for community. I.e. there’s no Bellingham community center.
- More “groups” like newcomer groups, walking groups. And capitalize on the skills, talents, interests of groups.
- Creating spaces and opportunities that mix people up outside their bubbles. People coming together from different backgrounds, neighborhoods, generations. Cross generational, cross cultural, encourage people to get to know people outside their usual circles.
- Integrate tribal voices into the conversations.

Thinking back over this conversation, what groups or individuals would you trust to take action on the things we’ve talked about?

- Neighborhood associations, Julie Guy (could see a need and spent time making it happen), Bellingham Public Library. Whatcom Community Foundation. Everyone needs to do their part, lots of affinity groups and citizen groups, like the Whatcom Young Professionals.
- Non-profits, City of Bellingham leadership (elected officials and staff)
- Bellingham schools, esp. leadership, redistricting project especially.
- Whatcom Human Rights Task Force
- Tribal leaders (Tribal communities, institutional structure not in the city, but many live outside the reservation area, need to be in the conversation)
- Youth and their voice.

Meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – April 16, 2019 at the Central Library, 210 Central Avenue, Lecture Room – at 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST
Secretary, Library Board of Trustees