



**Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, March 16, 2021 – Zoom meeting
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: Rick Osen, Jim McCabe, Rebecca Craven, Vernon (Damani) Johnson and Kristy Van Ness

Library Staff: Rebecca Judd, Annette Bagley, Bethany Hoglund, Jon McConnel, Jennifer Vander Ploeg, Katie Bray and Wendy Jenkins

Others Present: Hollie Huthman, City Council Liaison; Faye Hill, Friends of BPL; Carol Rofkar, Interim Superintendent of Traffic, Communications, Facilities and Fleet

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:30 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: Jim provided a correction to the February minutes: under Friends of BPL report, the last sentence should read, "They are starting with a SWOT analysis" rather than "They are starting with a SWAT analysis." Rebecca Craven moved to approve the February 16, 2021 Regular meeting minutes as amended and the February 2021 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Kristy Van Ness seconded. Motion carried.

Board Chair report:

- Rick commented that, with the COVID-19 vaccinations, he is looking forward to when the board can meet in person.
- Rick reiterated Rebecca's Director's Report comment, "I'm not sure how to adequately express my admiration for our resilient, dedicated, hard-working, and service-focused staff," adding that he is pleased the furloughs are cancelled for the remainder of the year.

Board member reports:

- Jim asked Rebecca if she would be mentioning City Council President Hannah Stone's communication with the Cordata Neighborhood Association in her report. Rebecca confirmed she would.

City Council liaison report:

- Hollie reported that the State authorized cities to approve a 1/10 of 1% (a penny on ten dollars) tax to be used for affordable housing and related services. City Council approved this increase yesterday to go into effect July 1st. This increase is expected to bring in approximately \$3 million a year and will be used alongside the current Home Fund to support housing and related services. The County is considering a similar increase.

Friends of BPL report:

- Faye reported the Friends are continuing work on a strategic plan, including updating their by-laws. Changes to the by-laws will be voted on at the Annual Meeting scheduled for April 24. They will also be electing all new officers, except for one position. Faye mentioned that Katie Bray was working with them to prepare for the Zoom meeting. Faye extended an invitation to all Trustees (the meeting link will be emailed to all current members).

Library Director report:

- Rebecca announced today is the 1-year anniversary of closing the Library for COVID-19. She commented that we only anticipated the closure would be for a few weeks or months, so a year anniversary is extraordinary. She added that she is grateful for the vaccine, so the closure won't extend for 2 or 3 years.
- Council President Hannah Stone reached out to Rebecca, and other Department Heads, to respond to questions Hannah had received from the Cordata Neighborhood Association Board. The Board had questions about roads, City planning, and a northside library. Rebecca responded to the northside library question, explaining that this was identified as an important issue in our strategic plan. Rebecca will be reaching out to Julie Guy and the Cordata Board President after we reopen to begin the process of identifying needed services. Rick added that he and Rebecca have talked with the Mayor about this, who approved reaching out to the northside.
- Rebecca reported that the recently passed American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 provides \$200 million in funding to IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) for pandemic response funding, which is four times more than the Cares Act \$50 million. Many of the funds will be directed through the State Library. Rebecca anticipates we will see grant opportunities soon. This will be another piece of the WCF funds allocation conversation, for instance we might be able to continue the wi-fi hotspot funding with a grant.
- Rebecca thanked Annette, Katie, and Suzanne for their good work on Whatcom READS, adding the author events were terrific in a challenging Zoom environment.
- Annette and Katie presented a sneak peak at the recently released [BTV Curbside Service](#) video. Annette commented that she hopes it will help patrons understand what goes on behind the scenes and she invited everyone to view and share.

COVID-19 Library services update: Rebecca provided a status update in two parts – steps to reopen and guiding principles:

- Steps to reopen:
 - The public elevator is being completely rebuilt with an anticipated completion date of April 8. We are currently relying on the freight elevator.
 - We are close to substantial completion of the remodel. Once this is signed off, we will have full access to the main floor and can begin to move the materials handling operations.
 - Collection work has been ongoing on the main floor. Rebecca thanked Public Works, especially Constance, for critical help with shelving installation.
 - Once the public elevator is back online and the Help Desk computers installed, Public Services staff can be relocated, holds can be moved upstairs, and Children's can be put back together.
 - Wayfinding – directional and end panel signage – is underway. Graphic Designer Katrina Lyons is helping with this project.
 - The communications piece of reopening will involve eNewsletters, eBlasts, website posts and social media – patrons are anxious to get back into the Library, so we want to keep everyone informed.
 - ITSD, in particular Doug and Paul, are working on getting a new server for the public computing network and setting up staff computers as well as phones
- Guiding principles:
 - Our 3 guiding principles are safety, equity and sustainability.
 - Safety: staff were invited to submit concerns surrounding reopening; primary concerns were enforcing mask usage and social distancing, as well as keeping everyone informed about service priorities.
 - Sustainability: we currently have 3 frozen positions.
 - Reopening target date is late spring. Information will be available on our website and we will be proactive about communication in our eNewsletter.

Rebecca turned the report over to Jennifer Vander Ploeg, who identified service priorities. Rebecca noted that we are in another period of fast-moving changes; we move to Phase 3 next week and anticipate more changes soon.

Jen screenshared Services during reopening at up to 50% (See Attachment #1– all Attachments are located at the end of the minutes) which outlines 5 areas of service:

- Self-serve indoor services
- Information Services/Assisted check-out
- Public computing/printing
- Curbside holds pickup
- Services to be deferred until later phases of reopening

Rebecca invited questions or comments:

- Rick commented that he feels this is a good way to explain the sequential process.
- Kristy asked if we would have curbside hours available while health issues continue. Rebecca responded that the curbside hours would continue until the public health emergency has lifted.

Facilities update: Carol Rofkar provided a nearly-end-of-project Remodel debrief. Highlights included:

- Substantial completion is anticipated for next Monday.
- There were many challenges: James Simpson passing away; sub-contractor issues; COVID-19; and the homelessness protests.
- The public elevator rebuild is still a couple of weeks out; this rebuild will provide significant control and fire upgrades.
- The Mayor recently toured the building to see the remodel and automated materials handler.
- \$1.8 million has been spent to date of the \$2.3 million allocated for the project. We also have additional funding for a \$450,000 upgrade to the freight elevator.
- A lesson learned is to address furniture early in the project. This was not possible for this project because furniture was not in the budget, so use of donated funds needed to be arranged.
- Carol commented that she appreciated working with Jen and Rebecca.
- Rick thanked Carol, adding she was good to work with.
- Rebecca complimented Carol on her weekly updates to Public Works.

Whatcom Community Foundation (WCF) and fundraising:

- WCF distribution: Rick recapped that we have 4 endowment funds that we receive yearly distributions from – Bragg-Muldraw and 3 smaller funds. Typically, we receive a 4% distribution. The WCF Board voted this year to allow up to 6% distribution. Our Board voted to take 6% on the Bragg-Muldraw distribution and 4% on the others. We recently received distributions totaling \$213,494, of which over \$197,000 is from the Bragg-Muldraw Endowment. At the last board meeting, Trustees discussed putting the large portion of the distribution into a fund for possible future building projects. After communicating with the Foundation, it was determined that the best path is to put it back into a new 'spendable' account attached to the Bragg-Muldraw Endowment. This will provide a good investment return while remaining accessible. Rick continued that at the April board meeting we can determine how much of the proceeds will be needed for projects and how much can be returned to the Endowment.
- Library Giving Day: Annette announced that Library Giving Day is April 7, 2021 which falls in the middle of National Library Week. She walked the Board through the website navigation from the Library's home page to the [Library Giving Day](#) page, and discussed the email script she would be sending to Trustees. Kristy suggested sharing this information with neighborhood associations. Annette confirmed she has contact information for all the members of the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Committee. Rebecca Craven suggested including information about what the 2020 Library Giving Day proceeds were used for (circulating Wi-Fi hotspots). Rick suggested mentioning that the donations are intended for things the City does not typically fund. Rebecca Craven said that, if Village Books still has a book club shelf, a blurb could be posted there.

New Business:

- No new business.

Action items for next meeting:

- Allocation of WCF distribution

Meeting adjourned at 4:44 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – April 20, 2021 – Zoom meeting – 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees

Attachments:

- Attachment #1: Services during reopening at up to 50%

Services during reopening at up to 50%

Overarching principles:

- Masks, 6' distancing, limited occupancy, extra cleaning and other COVID safety practices required
- In-person assistance limited, no extended contact
- Encourage short duration & low-touch visits
- Transitional services will be phased out gradually based on public health guidance and operational needs

Self-serve indoor services

- Browsing
- Pickup of holds
- Self check out encouraged
- Return of materials (indoor & outdoor)
- Videophone
- Single occupant restrooms
- **Branch library** browsing and holds pick up will be phased in as staff resources become available

Information Services / Assisted check out

- Short information & account requests
- Assisted check out (when needed)
- New card registrations
- Referral to remote assistance for tech help, in-depth information, holds requests, reader's advisory and other time-intensive transactions

Public computing / Printing

- Limited time sessions, one session per day
- Cleaning between users
- At-computer assistance not available

Curbside holds pickup

- Transitional service
- Limit hours available for curbside to allow for indoor services

Deferred until later phases of reopening

- In-person research activities, including microfilm
- Multi-user restrooms
- Public seating
- Meeting/study rooms
- Early learning centers
- Donations/free/for sale items
- In-building programs
- Extended visits
- Branch public computers