



**Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, June 21, 2022 – 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 and Kristy Van Ness

Library Staff: Rebecca Judd, Annette Bagley, Bethany Hoglund, Bernice Chang and Wendy Jenkins

Others Present: Leigh Ann Giles and Jennie Tuckerman, Friends of BPL Co-Presidents

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 McCabe moved to approve the May 17, 2022, Regular meeting minutes and the May 2022 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Kristy Van Ness seconded. Motion carried.

Board Chair report:

- Rick reported letters were sent to the nearly 100 Library Giving Day donors.
- Rick and Rebecca had a meeting with two representatives from Whatcom Community Foundation (WCF), three City Attorneys, and the City Finance Director. At question is one of the funds held at WCF for Bellingham Public Library – the Agency Endowment Fund. Donations to the Agency Fund, including the initial donation to establish an Endowment at WCF, are funds that the library received and then deposited (via a City of Bellingham check) into the Foundation. For accounting reasons, City funds (including these Agency donations) have limits regarding how they can be invested (low-risk investments). Rick and Rebecca will meet again with Finance, Legal and WCF to determine how best to handle the Agency Fund. All other funds held at WCF are donations given directly to the Foundation with the express wish that they benefit Bellingham Public Library.

Board member reports:

- Jim attended the last Cordata Neighborhood Association meeting and noted that this meeting did not include a discussion of a northside library location. Rick added that the Association is aware that we are working with the Master Facilities Plan consultants.

City Council liaison report:

- Out of town.

Friends of BPL report:

- Jennie reported the June pop-up sale was successful. Over \$3,000 was earned. Jennie thanked Rick and Rebecca Craven for attending. The next sale will be July 9 with an emphasis on science-fiction.
- Jennie thanked Kristy for the referral to the Franklin Academy; the Friends picked up 25 boxes of books from them.

Library Director report:

- Rebecca referred to the article in the packet on 1st Amendment audits, *Rights and Limits on Filming in Public Facilities*, by Aidan Mathis for MRSC (Municipal Research and Services Center). Rebecca reported that the Police department has had frequent audits, Planning and Parks have had audits, and possibly here at the library. Supervisors have been talking with staff, advising staying calm, asking if help is needed (as we would with any patron), and alerting a supervisor. In the event of an audit, we will follow up with Legal for support.
- Rebecca met with Skip Williams, City Councilmember for the 4th Ward, sharing information about our Strategic Plan and providing a tour of Central.
- Rebecca announced that Deborah Brewer, Public Services Librarian for over 30 years, retired June 1.
- Expanded hours began June 6. The Central library is now open until 7 p.m. Monday-Thursday. We will be open on Sunday afternoons following the Labor Day weekend.
- Rebecca invited everyone to march with the library in the Pride Parade.

Jim, referring to the information in the Director's Report about the 2021 Statistical Report being submitted to the Washington State Library, noted that RCW 27.12.260 states that the board of trustees of every library shall make a report to the State Library. Jim asked if Rick signs off on this report. Rebecca responded that no, Rick does not sign. By submitting this information, the Library satisfies the RCW requirement. Rebecca said she would send a copy of the raw data report to the trustees.

Rebecca Craven, referring to the Central Library walk-through with the City ADA Coordinator mentioned in the Director's Report, asked what improvements were suggested. Rebecca responded that there is uneven pavement due to stone lift and the lower-level entrance does not have a motorized door opening option.

Return to in-person Board meetings:

- Rick asked Wendy to read aloud his updated motion: "I move that the Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees continue to hold monthly Board meetings virtually

because it cannot hold in-person meetings with reasonable safety. This determination is based on the following findings:

- The Proclamation of Local Emergency for COVID-19 issued on 3-12-2020 is still in effect for the City of Bellingham; and
- The Proclamation of State Emergency for COVID-19 (20-05) issued on 2-29-2020 is still in effect for the State of Washington; and
- The most recent Whatcom County COVID-19 Data Report, issued 5-13-22, shows an increase in COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations.

The Board shall revisit this decision when COVID-19 conditions substantially change."

Rebecca Craven seconded. Motion carried.

2023-2024 Budget proposal discussion & decision – Action item (see packet materials):

- Rebecca screenshared the budget documents included in the packet, noting that the draft 2023-2024 Budget Requests document is the culmination of a long process. The center piece is improving level of service.
 - The first document is Deputy Finance Director Forrest Longman's memo outlining the Mayor's overarching budget priorities and the budget process and timeline.
 - The second document outlines the 2023-2024 Budget Requests for Operations that Rebecca suggests be put forth.
 - The third document discusses the library's established Level of Service (LOS) standards in four areas: Library facilities, Open hours, Library materials, and Library staffing FTE.

Rebecca provided background detail for the Staffing FTE budget request:

- The first three listed, 1 FTE Head of Public Services, 0.5 FTE increase to Staff Training & Volunteer Specialist, and 0.5 FTE increase to Adult Programming Specialist, are necessary for functioning at our current level of service. The Head of Public Services would restore the management team to previous level and would right-size the position Jen Vander Ploeg currently holds. When Deborah Brewer retired, Rebecca received permission to split the vacated position into two 0.5 FTE positions (the two specialist positions mentioned above). This request will be to increase each of the 0.5 FTE specialist positions to 1 FTE to have the number of hours needed.
- 2.7 FTE Staff are needed for the Bellis Fair Mall pilot.
- The last need is converting 4 Regular Non-Benefitted (RNB) 16-hour Library Assistant positions to 25-hour, benefitted positions in each year of the biennium. The library currently has retention issues with the 16-hour Library Assistant positions. Being able to offer additional hours and health benefits to more Library Assistants will benefit staff, the library, and the City.

Page 2 of the 2023-2024 Budget Request draft provides details for the Mall location pilot. If the pilot ends after two years, Rebecca is confident the staff can be utilized in other areas.

The Level of Service (LOS) outline concludes the budget documents. Rebecca pointed out that the June 2022 snapshot included in the LOS chart shows that we are currently at or below the Low/Minimal level for all categories. Rebecca is working closely with Forrest Longman to determine an accurate calculation for FTE, so this number could change with a different analysis. The LOS chart on the second page shows the growth with the proposed 2023-2024 funding increases.

Kristy asked how many RNB Library Assistants we have. Rebecca responded she would find out the exact number and get the information to the trustees [28].

Rebecca Craven asked if the Fairhaven auditorium and lower floor are included in the Library Facilities square footage calculation. Rebecca answered they are. In addition, closed stacks is included in the square footage calculation for Central.

Rick pointed out three things about the LOS standards:

1. The library materials calculation is based on a 2017 number and does not take inflation into account, so the 'growth' is overinflated.
2. We need to consider changing how we define open hours. For instance, with this budget proposal we do not increase hours at current locations but add a 'branch' – the proposed Mall location pilot.
3. An accurate FTE calculation has been hard to determine – there are many RNB positions listed, but not funded. As mentioned earlier, these unbenefited, 16-hour positions have a large turnover, so the FTE fluctuates. The training required for these positions is substantial.

Rick added that the LOS standards need to be updated next year to account for inflation.

Rick made a motion that the Library Director go forward with these 2023-2024 Budget Requests. Jim McCabe seconded. Motion carried.

Rebecca Craven asked if the City has given direction concerning the financial outlook for 2023-2024. Rebecca Judd answered that there is awareness and concern, but departments have been given the green light to submit requests. Rick pointed out that Forrest touches on this in his memo, calling the current financial situation strong, but the future is uncertain.

Facilities committee update:

- Rick reported that the committee has been working with Godfrey's Associates. An early draft of the Master Facilities Plan is expected in July. At last week's meeting with Godfreys, long range priority plans were discussed. Rick summarized the committee's first priority: in the next biennium, continue with the Central upgrade that was started last year, focusing on the upper mezzanine, the lower level, and an HVAC system. The HVAC system is on a short-list to receive ARPA funding support, but no decisions have been finalized at the Council level. The library also submitted a capital grant proposal to the State for Central Library renovation work, Grant decisions will be announced in October. Rick feels there is momentum in the City to move these projects along.

A second priority is to focus on branch libraries. The Bellis Fair location is a pilot project for a northside location, a potentially interim space while we consider where a branch should be located and what it should look like. Population growth continues on the northside. Rick also noted that Barkley is not big enough. We will consider what the options are with the City and Barkley Company. Only half of Fairhaven is used, and we'd like to explore how to better utilize the space. The committee plans a coordinated approach to the branches, first looking at northside opportunities because of the development going on there. And finally, we will come back to Central in the future to determine an addition or a replacement. This is all dependent on funding but outlines the general plan.

Jim added that this is a 10-year look ahead. Godfrey's proposed including the urban growth areas because at some point they will be added to the city. Looking at the LOS standards, the square footage per capita standard would be even lower than it is today. Godfrey's has been working with statistics that Chris Behee and Jon provided to map and identify gaps in service.

Rick said that Godfrey's will give a presentation at the August board meeting, and they will present to City Council at the end of August.

Rebecca Judd stated that Capital budget requests are due on August 5, so she will be providing a draft request at the July board meeting.

New Business:

- No new business

Action items for next meeting:

- Capital budget request draft approval

Executive Session: The Board went into Executive Session at 4:30 p.m. to determine a recommendation to the Mayor for the Trustee vacancy. The group decided on a candidate to recommend. They returned to Regular session at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – July 19, 2022 – Zoom meeting – 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST
Secretary, Library Board of Trustees