

Bellingham Public Library

Board of Trustees Bylaws

Relevant Codes and Laws:

[RCW 27.12.210 Library Trustees -- Organization -- Bylaws -- Powers and duties](#)
[RCW 27.12.190 Library Trustees -- Appointment, election, removal, compensation](#)
[RCW 42.30 Open Public Meetings Act](#)
[RCW 42.56 Public Records Act](#)
[Bellingham Municipal Code 3.08.010 Citizenship and Elector Requirements](#)
[Bellingham City Charter 7.02 Library Boards](#)

Scope

These Bylaws and Appendix 1: Board of Trustees Job Description, Appendix 2: Board of Trustees Code of Ethics, and Appendix: 3 Public Comment Guidelines apply to the Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees as they transact Board business.

Article I – Identification

The name of the organization is the Bellingham Public Library, located in Bellingham, Washington. The name of this Board is the Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees. Both organizations exist by the provisions of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW 27.12) and of the City Charter of Bellingham (7.02).

Article II – Purpose

The purpose of the Board of Trustees is to provide governance to the Library so it can fulfill its mission: Connecting Our Community with Each Other and the World. The Board accomplishes this by hiring the Library Director, advancing the goals of the Library, advocating for Library funding, adhering to the core principles and issues of intellectual freedom including the *ALA Library Bill of Rights*, and building support for the Library by promoting library services to the community. See [RCW 27.12.210 Library Trustees -- Organization -- Bylaws -- Powers and duties](#).

Article III – Board membership

Section 1: Number and Qualifications: The Board of Trustees is composed of five members as appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the City Council. Each member must be a resident of the City of Bellingham for at least one year prior to appointment as a Board member. (Municipal Code 3.08.010).

Section 2: Term of Office: The term of office of trustees shall be five years. No trustee will serve more than two full consecutive terms. A former trustee can be reappointed to a third term after a lapse of one year. If a member is appointed to serve an unexpired term of office and serves more than half of the five-year term, it shall be considered a full term of office. Trustees serve without recompense.

Section 3: Disqualifications and Vacancies: Trustees may be removed from the Board by the City Council for just cause. Trustees may be removed if: the Trustee moves out of the City of Bellingham, resigns, is absent from three successive meetings without good cause, or violates the Board bylaws or Code of Ethics. When vacancies are voluntary, the Chairperson is responsible for declaring the position vacant and notifying the Mayor. The Chairperson, by direction of the Board, may suggest names of qualified persons to the Mayor to fill the vacancy. When the Board has concerns about the performance of a Board member which may violate the Board bylaws or Code of Ethics, the Board may notify the City Council for assistance in deciding whether the Trustee should be removed from the Board.

Article IV – Board Officers

Section 1: Officers: Officers serve for one year or until successors are installed. Elections will take place annually. An Officer may be re-elected to the same office during their term of service. Vacancies in office will be filled by vote at the next regular meeting of the Board after the vacancy occurs.

Section 2: Chairperson: The duties of the Chairperson are: to preside at all meetings of the Board, authorize a call for a special meeting, appoint all committees, execute authorized documents, , and perform all other usual Chair duties. The Chairperson is a full voting member of the Board of Trustees.

Section 3: Vice Chairperson: The Vice Chairperson will assume the duties of the Chairperson in the event of the absence or disability of the Chairperson.

Article V – Committees

Section 1: Standing and Ad hoc Committees: will be formed as needed. The Board will determine a committee's function, term of service, membership and communication duties when a committee is formed. The Board Chairperson will disband ad hoc committees when their purpose is served.

Article VI – Meetings

Section 1: Conform to the Laws of Washington: The Library Board will conduct its meetings to conform to the Open Public Meetings Act (RCW 42.30) and the Public Records Act (RCW 42.56).

Section 2: Regular Meetings: The Library Board meets on the third Tuesday of each month, time to be designated, at the Bellingham Public Library or at a place and time designated for the meeting and so advertised at least 48 hours before the meeting.

Section 3: Special Meetings: Special meetings of the Board of Trustees may be called by the Chairperson or upon request of two members or the Director, for the transaction of business as stated in the meeting request. Notice stating the time and place of any special meeting and the purpose for which it was called will be given to each member of the Board of Trustees and advertised to the public at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

Section 4: Executive Session: Before the Board may convene in executive session, the chairperson must publicly announce the executive session to those attending the meeting by stating: (1) the purpose of the executive session, and (2) the time when the executive session will end. If the executive session is not over at the stated time, it may be extended only if the chairperson announces to the public at the meeting place that it will be extended to a stated time. If the Board concludes the executive session before the time that was stated, it shall not reconvene in open session until the time stated, unless all members of the public present at the beginning of the executive session are informed that the Committee is returning to open session. Persons other than the members of the Board of Trustees may attend the executive session at the invitation of the Trustees. Those invited should have some relationship to the matter being addressed in the closed session, or they should be attending to otherwise provide assistance to the Board.

Section 5: Quorum: A quorum for transaction of business shall consist of three or more members of the Board, which is a simple majority.

Section 6: Attendance by Electronic Communication: In rare circumstances and with pre-approval by the Chairperson of the Board, a Board member may participate by electronic communication. Members appearing remotely shall be counted towards the quorum required to transact business and may fully participate in the meeting, *e.g.* make motions, second motions, and vote, as though they were present in person. A person appearing remotely shall state on the record that no other individuals are able to hear closed Executive Session discussions.

Section 7: Order of Business: at regular meetings may include, but not be limited to the following items, some of which may be included as Consent Agenda items:

- Call to Order
- Adoption/Amendment to Agenda
- Public Comment (see details in Appendix 3)
- Minutes
- Financial Report
- Approval of Claims
- Library Statistics
- Reports and comments: Board members, City Council Liaison, Friends of the Library, Library Director
- Communications
- Library Issues and Events
- Summary and discussion of future agenda items
- Adjournment

Section 8: Parliamentary Procedure: Roberts Rules of Order (latest revised edition) governs the parliamentary procedures of the Board. All decisions and actions will be made by a majority vote of the Board following a motion and a second. The manner in which votes are taken is at the discretion of the Chairperson and may be voice, hand or written ballots.

Article VII – Library Director

The Library Director is the executive officer of the Board and has sole charge of the administration of the library under the direction and review of the Board. The Library Director is responsible for the care of the buildings and equipment, for the employment and direction of the staff, for the effectiveness of the

library's service to the public, and for the operation of the library under the financial conditions set forth in the annual budget. The Library Director or his/her designee will attend all Board meetings except those executive sessions pertaining to his/her job performance.

Article VIII – Amendments

These bylaws may be amended at any regular or special meeting of the Board with a quorum present, by majority vote of the members present, providing the amendment was stated at the preceding meeting or published in the agenda for that meeting.

Date Developed: 11 January 1966

Date Revised: 9 July 1985, 20 June 1989, 16 January 1996, 15 July 2008, 19 November 2013, 19 September 2023

Approved By: Library Board of Trustees on 19 September 2023

Appendix 1

Board of Trustees Job Description

Relevant Codes and Laws:

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Scope

This job description applies to all Bellingham Public Library Trustees.

Responsibilities of a Library Board Member

1. Represent and advocate for the community to the Library Administration and promote library services to the community.

Board members will:

- study, both formally and informally, the needs and interests of the community and ensure they are addressed by the library
- address petitions, suggestions and complaints by members of the public
- advocate library services to the community through contact with community groups and build rapport with the government officials including the Mayor and City Council

2. Establish library policy.

Board members will:

- participate in developing service-oriented library policies to govern the operation and services of the library
- regularly review, revise, or reaffirm library policies

3. Control the finances of the library.

Board members will:

- assist the Director in achieving adequate funding for the library from the City of Bellingham and other sources
- regularly review and approve financial reports of income and expenses
- work with the Director to present and defend the library's budget to the City Council

4. Plan for the future of the library and monitor the effectiveness of library services.

Board members will:

- plan for the library's future by assisting the Director in developing the library's mission statement and strategic plan

- review the strategic plan annually to evaluate the effectiveness of library services and to ensure that it is responsive to changing community needs
- review and recommend lease agreements, land purchases, and building contracts as needed for library purposes

5. Hire and evaluate a Library Director.

Board members will:

- employ a competent and qualified Director
- work as a team with the Director
- periodically assess the Director's performance
- direct and review the Director's responsibility of administering the library

6. Maintain and adhere to board bylaws and code of ethics.

Board members will:

- use the *Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustee Bylaws* to conduct its meetings and transact its business
- amend the *Trustee Bylaws* as needed
- abide by the *Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees Code of Ethics*

Required qualifications

Residency

- be a resident of the City of Bellingham for at least one year prior to appointment as a Board member

Preferred qualifications

Willingness to participate in Board activities:

- commit to five years of service
- prepare for and attend regular and special Board meetings
- actively participate in and contribute to meetings and work of the Board
- publicly support all decisions made by the Board
- serve on committees as appointed by the Board Chair
- abide by *Trustee Bylaws* and *Code of Ethics*
- meet with community groups, individuals, and government officials

Willingness to learn, devote time to, and become informed about:

- all phases of library operation and visit the library often
- the duties, responsibilities and authority of trusteeship
- core principles and issues of intellectual freedom including the *ALA Library Bill of Rights* and its interpretations, the *Freedom to Read* statement, confidentiality of patron records and the public's right to information
- current library trends and practices by reading the literature, taking advantage of training opportunities in conferences and workshops, visiting other libraries and talking to trustees from other libraries
- local, state and federal library laws
- library legislation, and when possible, attend Library Legislation Day

Helpful personal characteristics:

- concerned awareness of needs and interests of the community
- sound judgment
- sense of fiscal responsibility
- political skills
- ability to work cooperatively with others
- leadership skills
- initiative and ability to plan creatively
- ability to withstand the pressure of challenges from members of the community

Library Board reviews this job description

- This job description is periodically reviewed, revised, or reaffirmed by the Library Board of Trustees.

Appendix 2

Board of Trustees Code of Ethics

Relevant Codes and Laws:

[RCW 27.12.210 Library Trustees -- Organization -- Bylaws -- Powers and duties](#)
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Scope

This code of ethics guides the ethical decision-making for the Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees.

Code of Ethics

I value the opportunity to serve our community as a trustee of the Bellingham Public Library and will support and promote our library and the benefits of the public library system.

I support the freedom to speak, read, hear and view ideas and support unfettered access to all ideas. I recognize that libraries connect people to ideas and that library users are free to form, hold and express their own beliefs.

I give full consideration to the library service needs of all community members as I help form decisions in public board meetings.

I will join with my fellow board members, library staff and the community in continuing study of the nature, value and direction of public libraries in our society in order to facilitate needed change and growth.

I will comply with all national, state and local laws and regulations regarding public libraries, and follow only legal, professional, and ethical procedures.

I recognize that my responsibilities are limited to policy-making decisions, planning, budgeting and evaluating the Library Director and the effectiveness of the library in serving the community.

I will participate in official board discussions and decisions and recognize that authority rests with the whole board assembled in public meetings and will make no personal promises or take any private action which may compromise the board.

I accept the responsibility to work with our library administration and elected officials to provide adequate funding for our library that we may best serve our community and maintain optimum library standards.

As a member of the Board of Trustees, I have invested the Library Director with the responsibility for handling all staff, patron and vendor problems and complaints. I will listen to all concerns of the public

and refer complaints to the Library Director. Only after the Director's review will I act on any complaints that require further action.

Library Board reviews the Code of Ethics

- The Code of Ethics is periodically reviewed, revised, or reaffirmed by the Library Board of Trustees.

Appendix 3

Public Comment Guidelines

The Bellingham Public Library Board of Trustees conducts all business in compliance with RCW 42.30, Open Public Meetings Act. The Board welcomes public participation in meetings and has adopted the following guidelines:

- Attendees may address the Library Board of Trustees on any matter related to the business of the Library during the public comment portion of the meeting.
- Attendees are asked to sign-in at the welcome table before the start of the meeting and approach a microphone when recognized by the Chair.
- All meetings of the Board are open to the public, and public comment is accepted during the public comment period on the agenda. There is a three (3) minute limit for an individual to make a public comment. Total comments are accepted for a maximum of 30 minutes at each meeting unless otherwise ruled by the Chair.
- Please be aware that the Board will not respond to remarks during the public comment period or during the course of the meeting.
- Public comment is not taken outside of the designated public comment period.
- For virtual public comment options, please contact Library administration at 360-778-7220 by 12:00 PM noon on the day of the meeting. The Library Board of Trustees accepts written public comments. Written comments must be marked "Public Comment" and submitted by 12:00 pm noon on the Friday before the monthly Trustee meeting by (1) USPS mail to: Bellingham Public Library, Central Library c/o Board of Trustees, 210 Central Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225; (2) directly submitted to staff at the Administrative Office at that same address, or; (3) via email to librarytrustees@cob.org. Written Public Comment submitted by the deadline will be distributed to the Board of Trustees at or before the next regular Board meeting.