



**Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, June 18, 2024 – 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.

Board Members Present: Rick Osen, Rebecca Craven, Kristy Van Ness, Kendra Bradford, and Deborra Garrett

City Council Library Liaison: Hannah Stone

Library Staff: Bethany Hoglund, Annette Bagley, Katrina Buckman, Jon McConnel, Jennifer Vander Ploeg and Wendy Jenkins

FOBPL Representative: Carol Comeau, Friends of BPL Board Liaison

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Chair, Rick Osen.

Approve/modify agenda: Rick modified the agenda, placing the Facilities update before the 2025 Budget response. Rebecca Craven moved to approve the agenda as modified. Kendra Bradford seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: no comments.

Consent agenda: Kristy Van Ness noted that, in the performance and activity measures, the physical materials statistics show the number of items purchased and withdrawn-from-collection, whereas the electronic materials stats only show items purchased. Jon clarified that the Total electronic holdings for BPL is data we pull directly from the Overdrive website and includes purchased and withdrawn data. Kristy Van Ness moved to approve the May 21, 2024 Regular meeting minutes and the May 2024 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Deborra Garrett seconded. Motion carried.

Board Chair report:

- Rick reported that letters have been sent to all Library Giving Day donors. Total donations were over \$22,000, including the generous \$5,000 from the Friends.
- Planned Giving initiative—there have been delays from all sides (Board, Rachel Myers, and Whatcom Community Foundation (WCF)), but we are not in a hurry. The contract with Rachel has been extended through the end of 2024. The plan is for Rachel to attend the September Board meeting with her final report. Kristy reported that she, Rick, and Rachel met last week,

and Rachel said she had verbal agreement from WCF to send automated donor reports starting in July, including the last 6 months.

- Concerning the Public Records Act training now required for Trustees, Rick commented that we will invite someone from Legal to answer questions. Wendy added that the video training is 30-minutes long and is tentatively scheduled for the August meeting.

Board member reports:

- No reports.

City Council liaison report:

- No report.

Friends of BPL report:

- Carol Comeau reported that the Friends earned \$19,000 from the May book sale. The next book sale will be in September.

Deputy Director report:

- Bethany reported that July will be a busy month. There are many fairs and festivals—opportunities to meet the community where it’s at.
- Thursday, June 20 is Library Card Night at the Bells; admission is free with a library card.
- Katrina responded to Trustee questions about the Incident Report 2023-2024 comparison in the Director’s Report:
 - The ‘Inappropriate use of library spaces’ (Incident Keyword) increase is primarily due to the ‘Smoking/vaping’ (Secondary Keyword) increase from 2 to 119 that is a direct result of the Verkada bathroom sensors installation.
 - The reduction in ‘Dangerous, illegal or high-impact behavior’ Katrina credits to additional security staff, the mild winter and patron knowledge that the bathrooms have sensors.
 - The ‘Propaganda found’ increase is not due to increased incidents, but to the decision to include occurrences in incident reporting for tracking purposes.

Facilities update:

- Rick reported that due to the uncertainty about the total funding that will be available, further detailed design on the interior of the building is paused.
- Funding: If the state’s Library Capital Improvement Grant request of \$2 million comes through, we are still short of funding all the interior design/construction that is desired (likely a \$2.5-3M gap). Additionally, the funding will not be finalized until the end of the 2025 Legislative session.
- Conceptual design for exterior work will proceed once a contract with the architects is settled. We have identified WCF funds to cover design costs. Money for construction is tied to our Federal Appropriation request, which also won’t be decided until Congress passes its FY25 budget.
- City Climate office will be setting up an assessment for solar panels on the library’s roof. This information will be used for possible grant requests.

- Actual construction in the library will be delayed until 2026, based on total funding determined in the first part of 2025; as well as design, bidding, and contractor selection in the rest of 2025. This is a projected time frame and not an official one.
- Bethany reiterated that even if we are successful in our grant application for the state’s Library Capital Improvement Grant, we will still be short of funding for the planned renovation. Rebecca Judd has been working with the Mayor and Whatcom Community Foundation (WCF) Executive Director Mauri Ingram on possible funding for the gap. Mauri suggested that telling a story is more effective when shopping for local donors to fund our project than showing schematic designs. To gather stories, Bethany and Children’s Services Librarian Bernice Chang have been working with BTV to arrange interviews with families with children from birth to teens, asking why the library is important to them.
- Bethany reported we explored the possibility of leasing the vacant CHAMPS space at Bellis Fair Mall as additional Children’s space during the remodel. Now, with the remodel on pause and the construction timeline pushed back to 2026, it is no longer a feasible option.

2025 Budget response:

- Rick said that Rebecca Judd had shared a memo from the mayor’s office with the Trustees. Near the end, the memo says, “For all non-public safety General Fund departments, we are seeking budget reductions targeting 5%.” Rick clarified that this doesn’t mean this will happen, but we do have to explore how this would be done. Rick, Rebecca Craven, Rebecca Judd, and Bethany met and discussed submitting three budget options/scenarios to the city:
 - Option 1: A 2025 budget that fully funds the library, including needed increases in materials, staffing, staff development, general operational expenses and programming.
 - Option 2: A 2025 budget that accounts for “reasonable” reductions (less than 5%). This might include some temporary reductions to the materials budget, evaluating position vacancies as they happen and delaying staffing of some positions, and looking ahead to the Central Library closure in 2026 and resulting potential cost savings.
 - Option 3: A 2025 budget based on the parameters of the mayor’s email: a 5% reduction that does not include layoffs or furloughs.
- Jon screenshared the BPL 2024 Operating Budget pie chart that was included in the packet. Rick pointed out that Salaries, Benefits and Interfund costs (Facilities, IT, Legal, etc) are placed in our budget and then paid out through the year; we have no control over this 86.3% of our budget. The 5% reduction exercise requested by the mayor (~\$400K) would need to come out of the remaining 13.7% of our budget, primarily from Materials. Rick said that we are looking into possible stopgap funds for materials through WCF and the Friends.
- Hannah expressed that the City budget concerns are real and that it will be critical to explain the impacts of reductions and to consider other options for new revenue streams, such as partnerships.
- The idea of a dedicated library levy was proposed to lighten the load on the General Fund. This has been researched in the past (Services and Funding Models Study, December 2017 available on the library website on the Our Story page) and would need to be approached with caution as there are many competing levies such as school levies.

- There was robust discussion by Board Trustees regarding the crucial role the Library plays in the community, especially in light of public safety, which is a priority for Mayor Lund's 2025 budget. Board Trustees recognize the role that library staff and services play in our community and urged Library Administration to highlight that body of work in the budget options to be submitted.
- Rick said we will hold a Special Meeting on Monday, July 8, prior to the City's July 12 budget modification deadline. Rebecca Judd will have draft options for the board to consider.

Level of Service standards: Materials:

- Rick stated we will pause the LOS discussion since we won't be making a request related to it for this budget response.
- This gives us more time for reflection and discussion on a revised standard taking into account:
 - An appropriate inflationary index to use
 - Our partnership with WCLS
 - Changing natures of collections (e.g., more electronic)
 - Reality of city budgets
 - How often to review the inflationary index
- Rick proposed that a new LOS standard be settled and published by the end of 2024.

New Business:

- Deborra asked if we knew the specifics surrounding Seattle Public Library's ransomware attack. Jon responded SPL has not revealed specifics. When asked if BPL should be worried, Jon replied that everyone with a computer should be worried. He did point out that our systems are spread out across many servers which should offer some protection from a wide-spread attack.
- Kendra asked if there were any updates on ideas for reopening the plaza. Jen responded that there is a meeting coming up with the plaza project team. Hannah added that there isn't an update on the bike locker installations the City has planned.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Mayor Lund
- Finance Director Andrew Asbjornsen and Budget Manager Forrest Longman

Meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – July 16, 2024 – Central Library Lecture Room – 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees