

Bellingham Public Library



**Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, March 13, 2018 – Central Library
4:00 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, Jim McCabe and Damani Johnson

Library Staff: Nancy Kerr, Beth Farley, Bethany Hogle, Janice Keller, Jon McConnel, Jennifer Vander Ploeg and Wendy Jenkins

Others Present: April Barker, City Council Liaison; Faye Hill, Friends of BPL; 19 Library staff members

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 4:01 p.m. by Chair, Rick Osen.

Approve/modify agenda: Rebecca Craven moved to approve the agenda. Jim McCabe seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: Katie Bray read a letter addressed to the Board, signed by 45 staff members, in support of Nancy:

Dear Bellingham Public Library Board,

We, the undersigned Bellingham Public Library Staff, would like you to hear our experienced opinion of our Interim Director, Nancy Kerr, today so that you understand how much of the library staff appreciates her and her efforts to improve the library in the last year.

We believe that Nancy is an effective, successful, and professional director that has made a lot of great changes in her short tenure. Her desire to put patrons and staff first has garnered this library a lot of support in City Hall as well as in the general community. We believe that she is the director we want, need and respectfully hope that the Library Board takes this view into consideration when you conduct your search for a permanent director of the library.

This is a partial list of Nancy's successes here at Bellingham Public Library:

- Nancy has greatly improved the library's presence in City Hall and that has helped us get more money for the library and recognition for our work in the community.
- Nancy has improved staff morale, encouraged open and transparent communication, and generally made the library an easier place to work.
- Nancy is very aware of our staffing, space, collection, and technology issues and is doing a lot of work to change, improve, and/or solve them with staff, board, and City input.
- Nancy's dedication to our patron base is extraordinary and it shows in every interaction she has with the public.
- Nancy is currently focused on improving or changing a lot of lingering challenges around the library and it would be to our detriment to lose her before those changes fully take effect.
- Most importantly, Nancy has won our trust and we would like to see her become our permanent director.

We thank you for your time and consideration as well as giving us this space to speak on this matter.

Sincerely,
Bellingham Public Library Staff

Rick thanked the gathered staff members and stated their opinion will be considered very seriously.

Consent agenda: Rebecca pointed out that circulation statistics continue to astound, mentioning Overdrive is up 25% and overall stats are up 15%. Rebecca Craven moved to approve the February 1, 2018 Special meeting minutes, the February 20, 2018 Regular meeting minutes and the February 2018 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Jim McCabe seconded. Motion carried.

Board Chair report:

- The anticipated timeline for the Director search is position closing on April 6; Skype interviews of semi-finalists on April 27; and final, on-site interviews on May 21 and 22. Rick asked that trustees and April be available if possible.
- With the goal of incrementally improving the current facilities, Rick requested an ad hoc Facilities Committee be formed and appointed Jim to work with him. In previous years, the Board set aside Endowment Fund distributions for the purpose of planning. We are pursuing using some of those funds to hire an architect to provide ideas and cost estimates for small scale improvements. Rick met with Nancy and the management team last week to brainstorm needs.
- At last month's meeting, the board discussed getting City email accounts for trustees. Rick requested the opinion of James Erb, Assistant City Attorney, who suggested going forward with this. Rick asked Jon to begin the process.

Board member reports: Rebecca offered kudos to those involved with Whatcom READS. She said the Mount Baker Theatre event was really fun.

City Council liaison report:

- Council is continuing the discussion on the creation of a Regional Fire Authority (RFA). A public hearing is scheduled for April 9.
- Work continues on the Annexation Phasing Plan, looking closely at the Alderwood area, including the airport.
- April commented on the new biennium budget timeline, adding she would like to be in on Library budget conversation and also suggested inviting other Council members. Rick said that the budget will be a regular agenda topic for the next 3 to 4 meetings.

Friends of BPL report:

- Faye reported that their board meets next week and they are planning their Annual Meeting which is to be held April 28.
- The Friends had a table at the Whatcom READS Mount Baker Theatre event. They encouraged membership and gave away books and chocolate.

Library Director's report:

- The Interlibrary Loan Specialist and Director positions were both posted on March 2. We will be interviewing soon for the Adjunct Librarian position.
- Nancy has been working with Myron on the elevator repair – we now are just waiting on the permit process.
- Nancy, Doug, Paul and Jon had a meeting with IT staff – we will be requesting the ILS upgrade and an electronic sorter in the next budget cycle and need to ensure there will be adequate staffing for support.
- The Parks department is doing a great job cutting back overgrown foliage.
- Included in the packet are a couple of articles including one that lists the topics featured at the upcoming PLA conference in Philadelphia, such as *The Opioid Epidemic*, *Embedding Legal Services*, *Cultural Competence* – very different topics than the 'providing better reference' of past conferences. Jon added that one session, *Reflecting Community: The Importance of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Library Staffing*, is being presented by Brian Hulsey, South Whatcom Branch Manager.

Level of Service standard, Staff FTE: Rick reported that he and Nancy met and discussed the Staff FTE draft again and they believe 50 is an accurate number for Low or Minimal LOS, but this doesn't imply that is an adequate operational number. All of the LOS standards will need to work together, for example we can't get to Medium or Operational for materials or hours without having the staff. The Board has developed each standard separately, but now they will work on pulling them all together. Working on the premise that it is better to request increases in incremental steps will help to prioritize budget requests.

In response to discussion, Nancy added that this is not an exact science. These numbers are best estimates based on current information, but if other parameters change, such as hours of operation or new technology, the numbers may need to be reevaluated.

April asked for clarification about the bullet comments on the draft and suggested in the tying-together document, that the narrative state what we would be able to provide at an increased LOS, such as equity of service.

Rebecca Craven moved to adopt the Staff FTE LOS. Jim McCabe seconded. Motion carried.

2019-2020 Budget priorities: Rick reported this will be a main topic for the next several meetings. He emphasized the positive feedback we have received from the Mayor, who appreciates the LOS work we have done. Rick suggested the first step is to list major categories and then, down the road, prioritize them. Rick and Nancy have developed a list – some items that are a one-time expenditure and others that are ongoing costs.

- Integrated Library System (ILS): an RFP is being drafted and more solid dates should be available soon. The last time we upgraded, IT covered the cost – they would need to make a budget request for this. The ILS will require a higher yearly maintenance cost – we need to make a budget request for this.
- Electronic book return sorter: this will likely require three aspects – the purchase, a facilities retrofit, and a small yearly software maintenance fee. Nancy added that sorters generally pay for themselves after a while – nobody loses their job because of a sorter, but people are often re-purposed. Jon will be attending PLA and should have the opportunity to talk with sorter vendors.
- Staffing: this would be an ongoing cost. Nancy is working with the management team on prioritizing needs, first looking at tasks that have been tacked onto other positions and essential tasks going forward that we have no one to do. Rebecca asked if additional security is on the list. Nancy responded that it is, along with many other positions.
- Materials: last year Council approved a 3-year step increase in materials. This will move us closer to the 2nd Level of Service.
- Space planning (as mentioned earlier).

Policy update and changes:

- Meeting Room Policy update: Nancy reported that there have been a few disgruntled patrons concerning the changes, but after taking the time to sit down and talk with them, they have been understanding. Janice, Jon and Donna have put in many hours of work on this ongoing upgrade project. Rick thanked them for their work on this.

Whatcom READS: Janice reported that Sunil Yapa was an inspiring, thoughtful author. He did five events in three day, meeting about 1000 people (and probably remembering their names). Next year's book was announced: *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America* by Timothy Egan. Janice thanked everyone, especially the Friends for their support of Whatcom READS.

New Business:

- Concerning Public Comment during board meetings, Nancy and Rick asked for guidance from City Assistant Attorney James Erb. James informed them that some boards have public comment, others do not – the boards that do, thank the person for their comment, but do not respond. An issue can be added to the agenda if the Board wishes. April added that Council follows Robert's Rules of Order, also thanking, but not responding.

- Rebecca asked if James Erb had responded yet concerning the updated Rules of Conduct. Beth Farley responded that she thinks he did and she will forward James' response to Rebecca. Beth is willing to meet with Rebecca to answer questions.
- Rick suggested a review of the Board of Trustees By-laws.
- April offered to resend the link to the Coalition of Communities of Color self-assessment organizational tool (the first expired before opening).

Action items for next meeting:

- LOS standards
- Budget requests
- Rick asked that next month's board meeting be moved from the Barkley Branch Library to Central – at past meetings patrons were using the space and he felt our meeting was intrusive.
- April mentioned the Equity Summit 2018 that will be held in Chicago in April. There is a coalition from Whatcom County planning to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – April 17, 2018 at the Central Library, 210 Central Avenue, Library Board Room – at 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST
Secretary, Library Board of Trustees