



**Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, April 21, 2020 – 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: Rachel Myers, Rebecca Craven, Jim McCabe and Vernon Damani Johnson

Board Members Absent: Rick Osen

Library Staff: Rebecca Judd, Bethany Hoglund, Jon McConnel, Michelle Becker, Theresa Keith, Katie Bray (Zoom moderator), and Wendy Jenkins

Others Present: Hollie Huthman, City Council Liaison; Faye Hill, Friends of BPL

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:33 p.m. by Vice Chair, Rachel Myers.

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

Public comment: No public comment emails received.

Consent agenda: Jim requested a minor adjustment: on page 4, Under 2020 Action Plan draft, in the first sentence of the last paragraph, that "having a Public Services Librarian *host* workshops" be changed to "having a Public Services Librarian *participate in* workshops." Jon also noticed that on page 3, under Facilities Committee update, in the second sentence of the first bullet point, "along with Jon and James Simpson" should read "along with Jim and James Simpson." Damani Johnson moved to approve the February 18, 2020 Regular meeting minutes as amended and the February and March 2020 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Rebecca Craven seconded. Motion carried.

Board Chair report: No report.

Board member reports: Jim McCabe recognized and thanked librarians Katie Bray and Suzanne Carlson-Prandini for making it possible for the Bellingham Public Library book group

to meet virtually. Yesterday was the second meeting of the group since the closure and Jim expressed how nice it was to stay connected.

Rachel Myers expressed her appreciation for the creative ways the Library has been visible on the website and social media – the storytimes have been great.

City Council liaison report: Hollie reported that, at the last Council meeting, Library staff were acknowledged for their willingness to shift gears and take on new roles at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Friends of BPL report: Faye reported that her calendar for today reads, “National Library Week lunch for the staff.” This, of course, has been cancelled, as well as the May book sale. Faye added that the Friends will remain flexible about the September and January sales, optimistically stating, “there will be more.” She reassured everyone that the Friends’ financial commitment to the Library stands. Rachel thanked Faye for her upbeat attitude and for the ongoing support the Friends provide.

Library Director report: Rebecca thanked the Board for their support during this unusual time. She also thanked the members of the M-team who have been meeting every day for the last month, and the staff who have, with creativity and talent, pivoted quickly.

Rebecca pointed out that times of adversity are also times of opportunity. As the photo of the father pulling his child in a wagon to a Pennsylvania library illustrates, libraries have long been involved in bridging the digital divide. The current crisis has brought the inequities of digital access to the forefront, and conversations are happening at the city, state, and national level to address these needs. At Bellingham Public Library, all donations to Library Giving Day (on April 23) will be used to start a mobile hotspot lending program.

Next, Rebecca mentioned her work on a community-wide project to encourage individuals and families to capture this moment in time for future generations. She also talked about the need to reimagine and reinterpret our newly adopted Strategic Plan for the COVID-19 realities before us. The flexibility of the Plan, with its broad strategic directions, allows us to do this.

COVID-19 report out: Rebecca and staff provided an overview on Library activities and initiatives since the start of the Stay Home, Stay Healthy orders. Rebecca began by talking about Whatcom Unified Command (WUC), reporting that many Library staff members had worked shifts or served longer-term deployments. At the time of this meeting, six Library staff were deployed, including Jen Vander Ploeg as the Deputy Section Chief in Logistics, and Janice Keller as the Acting Communications Director in the Mayor’s office. Rebecca also mentioned that she had an assignment herself: working on deployment and asset tracking between the City and Whatcom Unified Command. In conclusion, Rebecca read a letter written by David Carter, one of our Clerks who is currently deployed:

Over the last few weeks, several staff members have been deployed to the Whatcom Unified Emergency Operations Center on Sound Way near the Bellingham Airport. We have worked mostly in the Logistics Section. The first week was rather chaotic. Paper requests for PPE (personal protective equipment) were pouring in from care centers

and medical offices from across the County. We would contact them and clarify what was needed. The care centers and medical offices would send someone to pick up their PPE from the EOC warehouse. Many of the orders were only partially filled because supplies were short and requests were often for vague, enormous amounts. This was referred to as the wildcatting days.

Each week, the process has become more organized and digitized. The paper 213RR request forms were scanned to a thumb drive. Inventory was more closely tracked, and zones were created in the warehouse to maintain social distancing. Only one person at a time is allowed in each zone. We also wear gloves and masks during our warehouse shift. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) has taken the lead in the warehouse, and Whatcom County Search and Rescue is now delivering the filled orders. Standardizing and streamlining the process has led to increased team efficiency as we help the residents of our County.

I miss my regular routine, but I enjoy helping the public through a different service. Everyone that I have encountered at the EOC has been very patient and professional throughout this crisis. We are fortunate to have such kind, knowledgeable and hard-working people serving our Community.

Deputy Director Bethany Hoglund then turned to Library services during the Pandemic. She framed the conversation by sharing three overarching goals:

- maintain continuity of services where possible
- maintain relationships with community members and provide opportunities to engage with Library staff for information, reading, programming and technology assistance
- provide staff with practical skill development and training opportunities

For Public Services, Bethany shared that the Library's call center is open Monday – Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Those hours complement the Whatcom County Library System's call center hours, which are from 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Staff also continue to monitor and respond to email questions from the public, including information and research questions, and process online library card applications. To ensure that patrons have new eBooks and eAudiobooks available, selection librarians are regularly purchasing new content. The Library is not currently ordering physical materials.

She continued that youth programming transitioned to virtual storytimes shared on the City's YouTube channel. There is a link to the channel on the Library's website and new postings are announced on Facebook. Bethany thanked Janice Keller and ITSD for helping the Library make this shift quickly. Teen Services librarian Jennifer Lovchik resumed her middle school book club meet-ups via Zoom; her first sessions were a smashing successes. She will continue to conduct a book club virtually with each of the public middle schools weekly. Bethany also reported that Youth Services staff is staying connected with public school librarians on how to best serve student learning in a virtual world. The Adult Services librarians are providing readers' advisory to the community through a weekly Facebook engagement called "Title Tuesday" as well as holding the Bellingham Reads Book Club via Zoom. Bethany reported that the librarians have been primarily focused on the new task of providing basic Zoom support for City employees. When ITSD alerted the Library of this need, the librarians quickly

learned the software and now serve as webinar moderators, much like Katie Bray is doing for today's Board Meeting.

Bethany updated the Board about a few other initiatives, including catalog cleanup work by Collection Services, and communications work that has been delegated while Janice Keller is at the Mayor's Office. In particular, staff are doing excellent work keeping social media accounts full of interesting, informational and engaging posts. Additionally, managers and supervisors continue to support staff by meeting virtually and being available to answer questions and guide work during this time.

Next, Administrative Assistant Wendy Jenkins reported on essential functions that continue while our building is closed. Payroll is essential, for instance, but Human Resources needed to develop simple ways to discern and track the variety of new work situations: deployment, telecommuting, standby, and COVID-related leave time. After this was put in place, every city employee needed training on how to use the new coding. At the Library, we also determined it was critical to have a back-up time administrator, so through Zoom and Skype, Amy Lathrop was fully trained to process Payroll.

Accounts payable continues, but with new digital methods to acquire supervisor and/or director approval. Similarly, statistics gathering, financial tracking, and board packet building all continue, but with new methods and noticing procedures.

Jon McConnel, Head of Digital Services, reported on telecommuting and digital collections. Digital services have been enhanced by several vendors during the emergency. For instance, a pair of vendors who normally limit access to in-library use have temporarily allowed remote access. We also added links on our website to resources that are currently free for everyone.

He also noted that the Library worked with ITSD to temporarily redeploy staff equipment to other City departments, as well as facilitate work-from-home opportunities for Library staff. Collection Services staff are among the telework cohort. The team has continued purchasing digital materials, processing invoices, and getting records for the new titles into our catalog.

Digital checkouts have been up significantly. In particular, the video-streaming service Kanopy and the digital newspaper service Newsbank, which includes full page access to the Bellingham Herald. Newsbank views went up 13% in March.

Theresa Keith, Supervisor of Materials Handling & Distribution, reported on training during the pandemic. She noted that Library staff have been completing online training at home, starting with FEMA Incident Command Structure training required by the City and in use now at Whatcom Unified Command. Also of note, the librarian team restructured in-house Help Desk training and moved it online. Staff have been working through these modules as they are produced.

Michelle Becker, Supervisor of Public Services, described how staff are supporting each other during this time. She mentioned that there has been support on many levels as we've quickly adjusted to this new world, and that support, good, communication, and connection go hand in hand. She then talked about Zoom, ITSD and librarian support for setting up this new

tool, and how important it was to be able to see faces during this time apart. And the value of levity too! Funny emails and chats go a long way. The Staff Association has also been instrumental: supporting staff with flowers and engaging activities on an internal Facebook page. She noted that connection is vital in keeping people engaged with each other, our work, the world, and thinking of the future.

In conclusion, she shared this statement from one of her staff: "I feel very supported by the quick response time of the librarians and all library staff that I've needed to get ahold of for answers to patrons' questions and referrals. The librarians have been great about taking the emails and calls I've referred to them and cc'ing me so that I can see that they've followed up with the patrons. Everyone has been very responsive and willing to help out in whatever way they can. I feel very supported by my colleagues and management. And I really appreciate the management and the City being so thoughtful and proactive about our health and in finding work for us to do from home, too."

Rebecca rounded out the COVID-19 report with a brief overview of our draft reopening plan, which is based on the New Mexico State Library model:

- Phase 1: return bins open with 72-hour quarantine
- Phase 2: curbside service, returns and pick-ups
- Phase 3: limited access in the building, with distancing and modified spaces
- Phase 4: business as usual

There will likely be shifting between phases. Timing will be based on the Governor's orders.

Central Library main floor remodel: Rebecca reported that the bid process for a contractor is open with bids due May 4. Public Works is handling the process and onsite tours. We are considering how to coordinate a phased reopening with a phased remodel.

2021-2022 Biennial Budget: The budget process for 2021 and 2022 will be starting in May. In the meantime, the City is talking with each department about adjustments to the budget for this year. For the Library, this will include:

- With the exception of Materials funds, money left from 2019 will not be carried over into 2020
- 2 open Clerk positions: on hold until we know more about when our service desks will open
- Library Assistant hiring process: on hold until we make sure all our current staff are off standby
- Children's Librarian II (2 positions): One will go forward as internal hiring process, one on hold

National Library Week – April 19-25, 2020: the national theme for this year was changed from *Your Place at the Library* to *Find the Library at Your Place*. Today is Library Snapshot Day. Rebecca took photographs of the empty Library, collected photographs from staff working at home, and even snapped a photo of the Zoom Board of Trustees meeting. These images will be part of the historical record of the Library during the pandemic. Other highlights for the week: Mayor Fleetwood reading *Thank You, Earth* by April Pulley Sayre, and Library Giving Day on Thursday, April 23.

Summer Reading: Bethany Hogle reported that Summer Reading will be virtual this year and extended until the end of September.

New Business: Bethany Hogle talking briefly about a new program. BOOKS & BADGES: is a collaboration between the Bellingham Police Department and the Library with the twin goals of increasing literacy through access to books for Bellingham children, and fostering positive relationships between children and law enforcement. Police officers will carry books, selected by the Library, in their patrol vehicles to hand out to children while on calls. Titles will be available in English, Spanish, and Punjabi, as well as wordless books for greater accessibility. Initial funding will come from a Project Neighborly grant from the Whatcom Community Foundation, with supplemental funding from the Bellingham Police Department. Additional program elements include a kick-off event in September and library-led instruction to police officers about 1) early literacy and brain development; 2) the importance of home access to books for future student success; and 3) how to do an engaging read aloud with a child that fosters brain development and relationship building.

Action items for next meeting:

- Remodel update

Meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – May 19, 2020 – at 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees