



Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, May 17, 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, Jon McConnel, Jennifer Vander Ploeg, Katie Bray and Wendy Jenkins

Others Present: Kristina Michele Martens, City Council Liaison; Jennie Tuckerman, Friends of BPL Co-President; Jeff Jewel, Photo Archives Research Technician for Whatcom Museum

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: Kristy provided a minutes' correction: the sixth sentence of the second bullet under Public Library Association (PLA) Conference round-up should read "... Junior Youth Board representatives were discussed at one session" rather than "... Junior Youth Board representatives were in attendance." Wendy pointed out that the YTD report reflects an increase of \$279,090 in the Library's budget due to the rollover of unspent funds from 2021 (we are in the second year of a biennial budget). Another change from last month is that the budget for the Automated Materials Handler was moved from a Capital to a Services line item because the remainder of the contract with Envisionware is for yearly maintenance. Kristy Van Ness moved to approve the April 19, 2022 regular meeting minutes as amended and the April 2022 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Jim McCabe seconded. Motion carried.

Board Chair report:

- Rick noted the members of the Personnel Committee (Rick, Rebecca Craven, and Rebecca Judd) and reviewed the Trustee recruitment timeline for the current vacancy:
 - The Personnel Committee will be reviewing applications the week of May 23
 - The Committee will meet on June 1 to select candidates to interview
 - Interviews will be held in early-mid June
 - An Executive session will be held at the end of the June 21 Board meeting to finalize a candidate recommendation for the Mayor
 - If the Mayor approves of the recommendation, he will forward it to City Council for an August vote.

Rick added that the vacancy posting is still open and suggested Trustees invite potential candidates to apply.

- Rick noted that the City's ARPA Grant funding process is still underway. HVAC for the Central Library is still under consideration.
- The Library applied for a Capital Improvement Grant being offered through the State Library, and Rick thanked Jen, Annette and Rebecca Judd for their work on the application. The state has \$10 million in funding for public library capital improvements for the July 1, 2023-June 30, 2025 biennium. It is a competitive process with a maximum grant award of \$2 million. The chosen libraries must have one:one matching funds. Rebecca added that the State Library will communicate their recommended projects to the legislature in October.

Board member reports:

- No reports.

City Council liaison report:

- Kristina reported that the City Council hosted a Town Hall Meeting on May 16-Community Voices on Public Safety. She invited Board members and Friends of the Library to submit their comments or recommendations on this subject through the Engage Bellingham platform.

Friends of BPL report:

- Jennie thanked Kristy, Katie and Rebecca Judd for speaking at the Friends' Annual Meeting, and Katie for moderating.
- The Friends held a pop-up book sale on Saturday, May 14, where they made just over \$2,000 despite the bad weather. They provided copies of the library's Master Facilities Plan Community Survey for patrons to fill out. Jennie added that Myra will be hosting an information table at this Saturday's Farmer's Market, and she will also have surveys on hand. Jennie thanked Annette for the new green tablecloths.
- The next pop-up book sale is scheduled for Saturday, June 11, including a children's pop-up sale.
- Jennie thanked the board for the opportunity to meet with the Godfrey's team. They discussed their book sale process and fund-raising ideas.
- Jennie also applauded the new wrap designs for the trucks.

Library Director report:

- Rebecca reported that Ryan Dowd's [Skills for Interacting Confidently and Compassionately with Individuals in Crisis \(mountbakertheatre.com\)](http://mountbakertheatre.com) is this Friday, May 20. To date, there are 992 registrations. The Mayor will be providing welcoming remarks.
- Summer Reading for all ages starts June 1. Rebecca thanked everyone who is working on this program.
- Rebecca reminded the Trustees that Central's increased hours will take effect Monday, June 6. We will be open from 10 am to 7 pm Monday-Thursday, 10 am to 6 pm on Friday and Saturday.

Return to in-person Board meetings:

At the May 23 meeting, City Council will be discussing in-person Council meetings, and the Mayor will be following up with direction to City boards and commissions. Because the Library Board is a governing body, the Trustees also need to make a decision about returning to in-person Board meetings or remaining virtual. The discussion and decision are needed this month because the Governor's order requiring virtual meetings will expire in June. There are three options:

- 1) Return to in-person meetings
- 2) Remain virtual
- 3) Host a hybrid meeting.

Considerations for the decision include:

- If we choose to remain virtual, we will need to provide documentation – a motion noted in the meeting minutes – stating that we cannot hold in-person meetings with reasonable safety.
- Covid caseloads are starting to go up again in our local area. As many people are testing with home kits and not reporting to the County, experts suspect caseloads are underreported.
- The Proclamation of Local Emergency is still in effect.
- The Proclamation of State Emergency is still in effect.
- We can recommend, but not require, that attendees wear face masks.

Rick invited trustee comments:

- Jim commented that at a meeting at the Whatcom Unified Emergency Coordination Center, Liz Coogan, Emergency Manager for the City, stated that the operating guidance about masks is that they are optional. Jim asked if, under the Open Public Meetings Act, we would need a Special meeting to alter a decision to remain virtual. Rick responded that the Board would need to hold a Special meeting in that instance.
- Kristy commented that she would like to make sure everyone who comes to the meeting is comfortable.
- Rebecca Craven commented that, if we go to in-person meetings, she will wear a mask, adding that she isn't sure we are at a place of public necessity to return to in-person meetings. Her suggestion is that we remain virtual until we are told we can't.
- Jim agreed with Rebecca Craven's suggestion, saying virtual meetings are working well. He has some concern that some members of the public might feel excluded with Zoom access, but we have so few public commentors.

- Rebecca Craven asked Rebecca and Wendy if the library has received any requests for in-person board meetings. Rebecca and Wendy answered, "No."
- Rick concluded that the board consensus is to stay virtual for the June meeting, then reassess.

Rick stated, "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;
- 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 5-13-2022 for the period of 4-1-2022 to 4-30-2022, shows an increase in COVID-19 case counts and hospitalizations as follows:
 - Whatcom County experienced an increase in confirmed and probable COVID-19 case counts during April. The 7-day average daily case count climbed to 67 cases per day.
 - The 7-day rate for COVID-19 hospitalizations by specimen date among Whatcom County residents increased and reached 5.7 per 100K by the end of the month. An increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations occurred among individuals 65 and older during the month of April.

The Board shall revisit this decision at the June 21, 2022, Board meeting."

Jim McCabe seconded. Motion carried.

2023-2024 Budget update:

- Rebecca reported that the budget process kicked off at the April 25 City Council meeting. At this meeting, the Mayor outlined five priorities for 2023-2024:
 - 1) Public Safety, including alternative responses
 - 2) Continuing investment in climate action and reducing the City's climate impact
 - 3) Maintaining and expanding investments in affordable housing
 - 4) Supporting vulnerable populations
 - 5) Easing the effects of the coronavirus pandemic and supporting recovery efforts
- New funding requests for departments are due in early July
- There is a new Capital request process. The timeline for Capital requests has not been finalized.
- The management team will be preparing recommendations based on our Levels of Service, as well as right-sizing a few underfunded line items.
- Rebecca will have draft requests prepared for discussion at the June Board meeting.
- Rick added that he and Jim, as Chair and Vice-Chair, will meet with Rebecca prior to the June meeting to preview the requests and offer ideas.
- The Mayor will evaluate requests from all departments and deliver recommendations to Council on October 1. Council will then hold work sessions with departments and approve the budget in December.

Facilities Committee update:

- Rick reported that Godfrey's consultants were on site May 2-6 to meet with stakeholders and community members. On the final day, the consultants met with the Facilities Committee for a debrief.
- Rebecca noted that the one-on-one stakeholder meetings included all 7 Council members, all Library Trustees, a Zoom meeting with the Mayor, an in-person meeting with Blake Lyon, the new Planning and Community Development Director, and representatives from all 4 Connections libraries (including tours of the facilities). Eight focus groups were held including the Friends of Bellingham Public Library, 3 staff groups (management, librarians, and Public Service staff), a virtual session for parents with children, and 3 groups from neighborhoods north of I-5. Rebecca added there was a lot of rich conversation. One of the consultants attended storytimes at the mall and met with Children's staff. Another consultant, focused on technical and digital collection services, met with Jon, Doug and Paul.

Photo History of Bellingham Public Library:

- Jeff Jewel, Photo Archives Research Technician for Whatcom Museum, presented a photo history of the early libraries in Fairhaven, New Whatcom, and combined Bellingham. (see *Attachment #1* for a selection of Jeff's historic library photos. All attachments are at the end of the minutes).

New Business:

- No new business.

Action items for next meeting:

- 2023-24 Operating budget proposal
- Revisit meeting format – virtual or in-person
- Executive session to determine a Trustee recommendation

Meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – June 21, 2022 – Zoom meeting – 3:30 p.m.

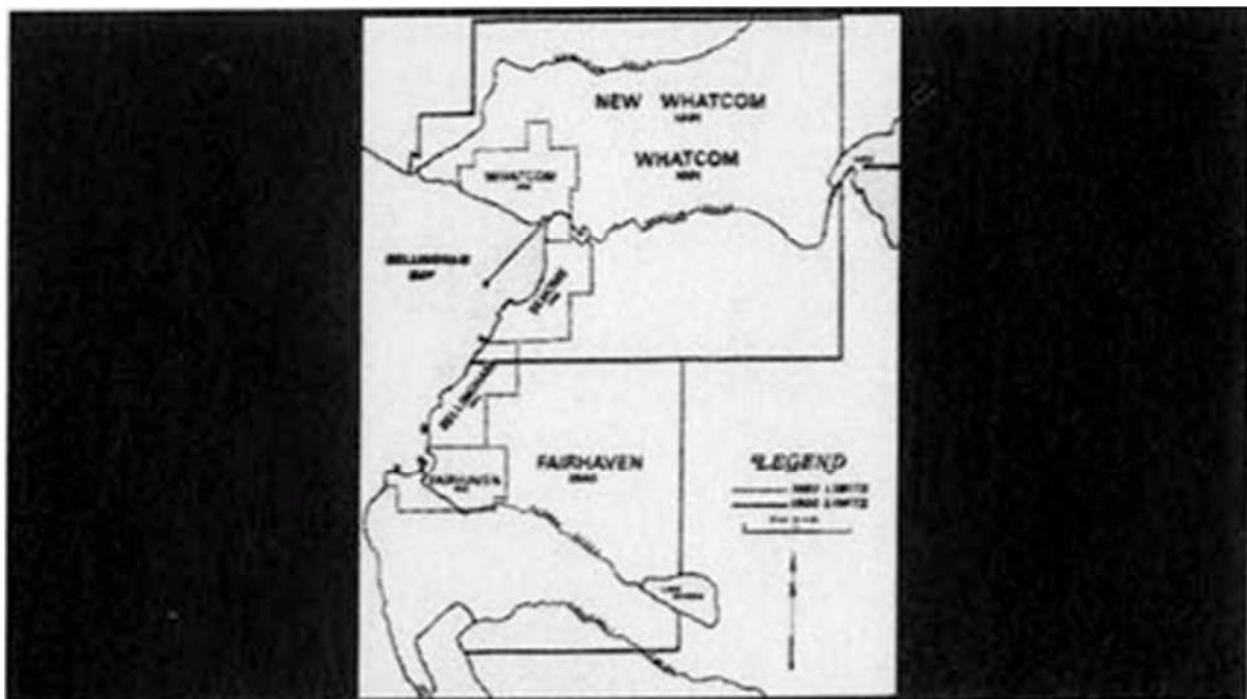
Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees

Attachments:

- Attachment #1: selected photos from Jeff Jewel's *Photo History of Bellingham Public Library*



Boundaries for the two towns of Fairhaven and New Whatcom after consolidation from original four towns and prior to becoming the City of Bellingham



Original New Whatcom Public Library, NE corner Magnolia and Dock (Cornwall Ave.), 1892



Side view of the expanded (uplifted!) New Whatcom Library, 1902



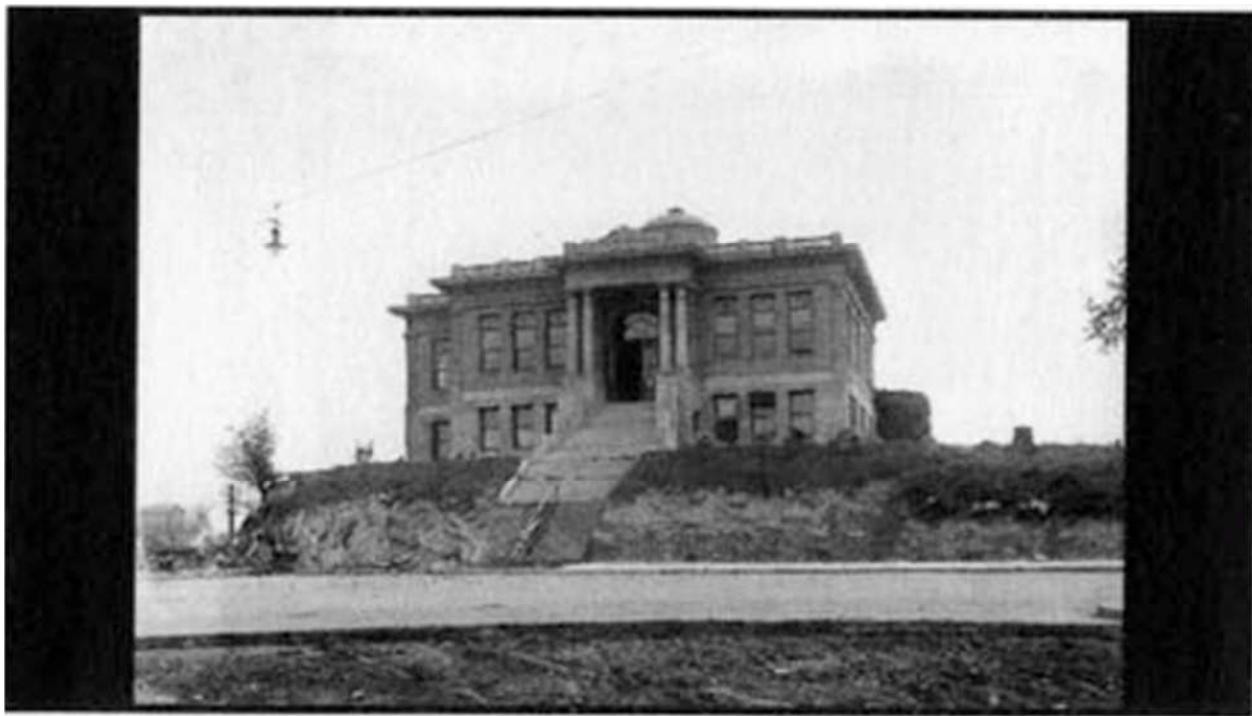
Early photography of the Carnegie-funded Fairhaven Library, late 1904 / early 1905



Early photograph of the Carnegie-funded Bellingham Public Library, NE corner of Commercial and Champion, 1908



YWCA-run cafeteria in the basement of the Bellingham Public Library (downtown Carnegie)



Adding to the stairs at Bellingham Public Library (downtown Carnegie) after Commercial Street was lowered



Editorial about the steps to the Bellingham Public Library (downtown Carnegie), c. 1948



Overflowing with books at the Bellingham Public Library (downtown Carnegie). This photo, and similar images of 'overflow,' were taken to show the need for a new library! 1947-48

(Paid Advertisement)

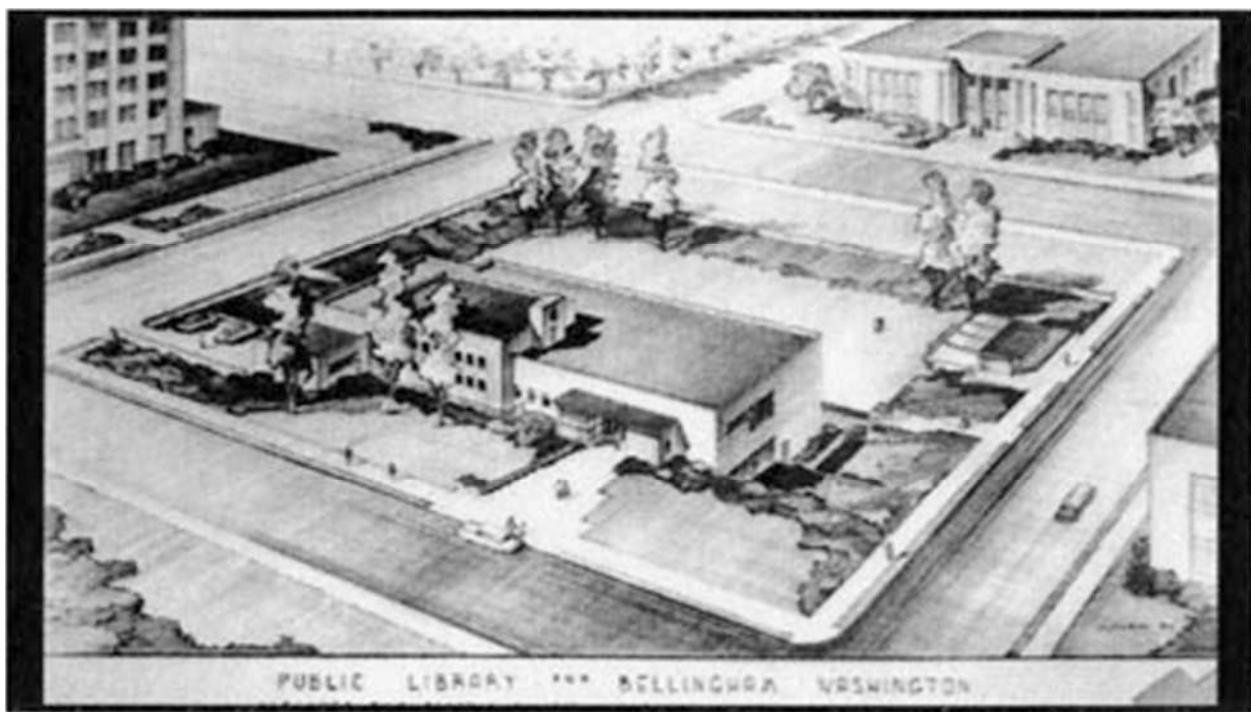
DID YOU KNOW

... that Bellingham's present public library was opened in 1908, when we had only 4,000 books? And that during 1947, the library had a stock of 82,000 books alone, with 201,547 circulations of these volumes?

This is just one more of the many reasons Bellingham deserves a modern, serviceable library building. Watch for others.

**VOTE FOR THE LIBRARY
NOVEMBER 2**

Advertisement to vote for a new Bellingham Public Library, 1948



Architectural rendering of the new Bellingham Public Library, 1949



Newly completed Bellingham Public Library circa 1951