



Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, November 18, 2025 – 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:	Rebecca Craven, Kristy Van Ness, Kendra Bradford, Deborra Garrett, and Shirin Deylami
City Council Library Liaison:	Hannah Stone
Library Management Staff:	Rebecca Judd, Annette Bagley, Katrina Buckman, Bethany Hoglund, Jon McConnel, Jennifer Vander Ploeg and Madeline Rosenvinge
FOBPL Representative:	Carol Comeau, Friends of BPL Board Liaison
Guest Presenter:	Kate Dunphy, Staff Development Coordinator

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:32 p.m. by Chair, Rebecca Craven.

Approve/modify agenda: Kristy Van Ness moved to approve the agenda. Shirin Deylami seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: No public comment.

Consent agenda: Deborra Garrett moved to approve the October 21, 2025 Regular meeting minutes and the October 2025 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Kendra Bradford seconded. Motion carried.

Board Chair report: Rebecca Craven reported that it was meaningful to attend the WDRC dinner where the Library received the Peacekeeper Award. She also commented on the Literacy Council breakfast with Nancy Pearl, noting that it was a positive event.

Rebecca Craven announced that Kristy Van Ness's first trustee term expires in January 2026. She moved to extend Kristy's trusteeship for one additional term, and the motion was seconded by Deborra Garrett. The motion carried. Rebecca Judd will request the reappointment from the Mayor.

Board member reports:

- Kristy Van Ness attended the Library's Listen Deeply event, which was moving and well-attended by 180 community members. She expressed appreciation to FOBPL and Library staff for organizing the event.
- Shirin Deylami shared that WWU is hosting Ralph Munro seminars on civic education and engagement on November 18 and 19.

City Council Liaison Report: Hannah Stone reported that the Peacekeeper Award video was very impactful. She also noted that in a recent interview with AWC Cityvision Magazine, she emphasized the importance of the new REET funding legislation to the Library.

Friends of BPL Report: Carol Comeau reported that she attended the Listen Deeply event, the Book Club Social, and the Literacy Council breakfast, all of which were well attended. She stated that the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library Board meeting is scheduled for November 19. She also indicated her desire to bring advocacy talking points to the County Council regarding the need for day shelters.

Library Director Report: Rebecca Judd reported that *Solito* has been selected as the Whatcom Reads title for 2026. She announced that Isabel Wilkerson will speak this winter about her book *Caste*. She thanked staff for their work on the Book Club Social and the Listen Deeply Film Fest, with particular recognition of Miranda LeonJones and the adult programming committee.

Rebecca stated that funding requests will be presented at the Friends Board meeting the following day, with final decisions expected in January. In response to a question from Kendra Bradford about changes to digital service access, she clarified that the changes affect non-Washington residents and Washington residents living outside Bellingham and Whatcom County. In response to a question from Shirin Deylami about circulation trends, she explained that increased branch hours likely contributed to recent circulation patterns. Bethany Hoglund added that youth circulation increased due to expanded hours and changes to the youth collection.

Rebecca Craven raised concerns about visitor numbers during the Central Library renovation. Deborra Garrett noted the high number of incidents referenced in the Public Services report included in the board packet.

Staff Learning Day Presentation: Kate Dunphy provided a presentation on the logistics and outcomes of Staff Learning Day 2026. (*See attachment #1 at the end of the minutes*).

Staff Safety and Mental Health/Welcoming Public Space update: Katrina emphasized the Library's role in serving vulnerable populations and the resulting impact on staff. She reported that incident data is now shared monthly with the Downtown Forward group, which includes the Bellingham Police Department and the Fire Department.

Rebecca Judd underscored the importance of communicating the Library's experiences with the public and reiterated the community's need for a daytime shelter. The discussion also addressed how

programming in Lee Memorial Park may influence incident rates.vBoard members and staff discussed possible strategies for advocacy and increasing public awareness of these issues. Deborra Garrett moved to create a working group to explore advocacy strategies related to the Library's needs. The motion was seconded by Shirin Deylami and carried.

2026 Budget Update:

- Nothing to report.

Central Library Renovation Update:

- The new Bellis Fair lease contract has been signed.
- Kristy Van Ness reported recent donations: \$75,000 from the Mary Storr Foundation, \$10,000 anonymous gift, and a new Planned Giving Form submission.

2026 Holidays & Closures – Action Item (see packet materials)

- Rebecca Judd noted the 2-day Independence Day closure due to the Library's weekend schedule.
- Kendra Bradford moved to approve. Deborra Garrett seconded. Motion carried.

2026 Meeting Schedule – Action Item (see packet materials)

- Bellis Fair will be the placeholder location for fall meetings.
- Kendra Bradford made a motion. Deborra Garrett seconded. Motion carried.

2026 Rates & Fees – Action item (see packet materials)

- Kendra Bradford made a motion. Deborra Garrett seconded. Motion carried.

New Business:

- None.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- 2026 Action Plan draft

Meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting Tuesday, December, 16, 2025 – Central Library Lecture Room – 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees

Attachments:

- Attachment #1: Staff Learning Day Presentation



- Meet the Staff Learning Day committee
 - Guiding statement
- “Launch” preparations
- “Launch” day 10.8.25
- Asteroid field
- Lessons from previous orbits
- Mission debrief
- Future mission
- Questions?

Staff Day Committee



Dani Knapp



Dani Sheldon



Lark Clayton



Jen Lovchik



Miranda Leonjones



Jenni Johnson



Kate Dunphy

Guiding Statement

We want our event to offer an employee-centric, participatory, active learning environment where staff members can learn new information and strengthen existing skills within and across every workgroup. After attending, BPL colleagues will have a better understanding of each other's roles, feel a greater sense of unity, and have increased enthusiasm and motivation for our work together.



“Launch” Preparations

- Internal speaker application process
 - 9 proposals
 - 7 selected, 2 combined
- Pre-event survey to all staff
 - 30 responses (40% response rate)
- External speaker survey and prep interviews

“Launch” Preparations

- Washington State Library Professional Development grant
 - Individual and group applications accepted
 - \$6,000 max per library system
 - \$1,000 max per individual library employee
- Support from Friends of Bellingham Public Library
- Adjust staffing and delivery schedules week of 10/8
- Confirm M-team support for event set-up and strike
- COB collaboration
 - BTV - Ben Skudlarek
 - HR benefits team

“Launch” Day

- All branches closed
- Staff report to Bellingham Cruise Terminal
- 8:30 - 5:00pm
- COVID booster & flu shot clinic
- Accessibility & comfort
 - Movement breaks
 - Sensory tools
 - Coffee, meals, snacks
 - Low-sensory space



“Launch” Day

- 3 breakout periods
 - 7 sessions
- 6 all-staff sessions
- 15 internal presenters
- 4 external presenters
- Passive interaction stations
 - Staff led-games
 - Library scrapbooks



2025 STAFF LEARNING DAY
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025
BELLINGHAM CRUISE TERMINAL - 355 HARRIS AVE
DOORS OPEN AT 8 AM - PROGRAM BEGINS AT 8:30 AM
PROGRAM ENDS AT 5 PM



Asteroids

- External presenter cancellation
- Venue repair work
- Misaligned external presenter



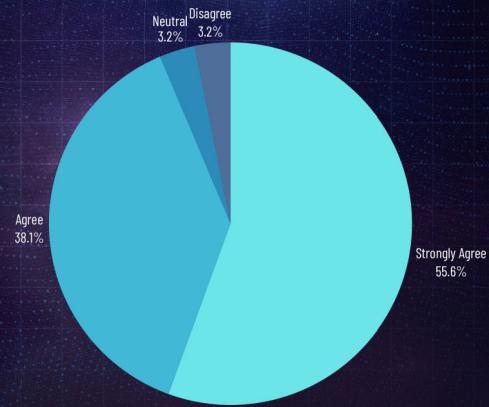
In Our Last Orbit...

Lessons Learned...

- INTERNAL SESSIONS RESONATE STRONGEST
- BREAK UP THE AFTERNOON SCHEDULE - MORE MOVEMENT AND CAFFEINE
- FOCUS ON PRESENTERS FROM COMPARABLE (OR LARGER) LIBRARY SYSTEMS
- ADJUST STAFF SCHEDULE IN DAYS FOLLOWING THE EVENT

Mission Debrief

- WSL Evaluations collected at event.
 - 63 of 74 participants responded.
 - 85% response rate
 - 59 of 63 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something by participating in Staff Learning Day
- 2025 Staff Survey conducted via digital form in early November.
 - 41 of 74 invitees responded.
 - 55% response rate



Mission Debrief

- 2025 Staff Survey
 - *How did this year's Staff Learning Day compare to 2024?*
 - "I enjoyed this year's more. It felt more interactive and kept me engaged compared to the previous year. Given that this is only the second year, the improvements felt impactful."
 - "I think both were really well orchestrated! I appreciated how many inhouse presenters there were, as these sessions from 2024 had been among my favorites. The librarian panel in particular was wonderful! Coffee didn't run out!"

Mission Debrief

- 2025 Staff Survey
 - *What worked well at Staff Learning Day 2025 that we should keep doing in the future?*
 - "Loved the opportunities to move. Many of us move as part of our daily work, so staying seated for an entire day creates aches and pains. This year's yoga and stretching sessions were much appreciated."
 - "I like the food/beverage setup. Mixing up different workgroups at the table is really great!! Have longer staff member presentations, those were the best!! Rebecca's update on reno and actually asking for questions and answering what she could, thank you! I liked the 'get to know the librarians'. It would be cool to do that with CS, IT, Security, etc. "

Mission Debrief

- 2025 Staff Survey
 - *What did not work well at Staff Learning Day 2025 that we should either correct or not do next year?*
 - "This year almost felt too full, if that makes sense. I would also like to see more focus on our local partners."
 - "It seemed like every single session included active participation. It was draining having to be mentally engaged for every single session. Maybe throw in some straight lecture sessions where the audience isn't forced or encouraged to participate and can just focus on listening."

Mission Debrief

- 2025 Staff Survey
 - *What was missing from Staff Learning Day 2025 that we should start doing next time?*
 - "It would be neat to have the primary presenter be a nationally recognized librarian for banned books or books that community can be in conflict with. Working in and through conflict while working towards freedom of speech/reading rights for all. Unfortunately this might be even more relevant next year."
 - "We may want to do more team-building activities in 2026 since our time together as staff will be disjointed as a result of the Central building renovation and closure."

Mission Debrief

- *On a scale of 1-5 lightbulbs (with 5 being the most successful and 1 being the least), and with the entire day in mind, please rank how well the Staff Learning Day Committee met our guiding statement:*
 - Staff members' average rating: 4.29 out of 5.



Mission Debrief

- 2025 Staff Survey
 - *What are the primary factors for your ranking above?*
 - "I think that the Staff Learning Day Committee met their guiding statement. The sessions included a lot of active participation. I don't necessarily think that active participation is the best or most enjoyable way for everyone to learn."
 - "The day felt very employee-centric that created unity and I really enjoyed learning about the librarians at the end of the day! I think there was still a piece missing related to deepening my understanding of everyone's role."

Future Missions

- October 7, 2026
 - Whatcom Museum's archivist and historian, [Jeff Jewell](#)
 - ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom's director [Deborah Caldwell-Stone](#)
- And beyond!
 - Increased promotion of internal speaker application process to all BPL staff

- 2025 Staff Survey
 - *Is there any other feedback you'd like to share?*

"Thank you for putting on a Staff Day! It is valued and is a huge lift. I'm laughing at myself as my primary criticism is, "I want more time to learn about my co-workers". Wanting more time with co-workers is good, right?"



Questions?