

North Central Washington Libraries
September 20, 2023

I. Call to Order

Nancy Churchill called to order the September meeting of the NCW Libraries Board of Trustees at 1:04 p.m. September 20, 2023. The meeting was held in person at the NCW Libraries Board Room with an option to attend virtually.

II. Attendees

Attending Board members included Nancy Churchill, Kathleen Allstot, Denise Sorom, Jim Mitchell and Lisa Karstetter. Also in attendance were Barbara Walters, Executive Director; Kim Neher, Deputy Director; Aaron Floyd, Director of IT Services; Mike Githens, Interim Director of Finance (attending virtually); Tim Dillman, Executive Assistant.

Guest attendees- Summer Hess, Sage Step Consulting. Gina McCoy attended to provide public comment. Marcy Stamper, reporter from the Methow Valley News also attended.

III. Public Comment

Gina McCoy read from written remarks.

IV. Ammending Agenda

A suggestion was made to strike item 9 (HR Report) and item 11 (IT Report) from the agenda and move item 7 (Approval of Resolution 23-08) to the start of the meeting.

Denise moved to ammend the agenda as proposed.

Jim seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Resolution 23-08

Legal counsel Julie Norton presented the final version of the Open Public Meetings Policy. Julie commented that the only significant change since the board's last viewing was the incorporation of a section on Executive Sessions.

Jim moved to adopt Resolution 23-08-Establishing an Open Public Meetings Policy.

Kathleen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Consent Agenda Items

- a. September Meeting Agenda (amended)
- b. Minutes of the August 17, 2023 Board meeting
- c. Payroll & vouchers
 - i. August payroll for \$608,995.64 and Benefits for \$212,565.38
 - ii. August Accounts Payable for \$368,067.07
 - iii. Staff Reports

Kathleen moved to approve the Consent Agenda as amended.

Denise seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Financial Report

Mike shared that property tax revenue is where it is expected to be at this point in the fiscal year. The second tranch of property taxes will be realized in the November financials.

Mike shared some background information about the Federal Funds Rate which has bearing on the position of the district's investment funds.

As part of his review of August expenses, Mike shared that the district learned there will be a slight increase on the employer side of PERS effective September 1st. The fuel line item continues to trend higher than budgeted due to high inflation. The end of August expenses were at 58.6% of budget. Mike shared that upcoming payments for liability insurance and contracting city payments will bring spending more in line with budget in the coming month.

Mike reviewed the current spending on the Reimagining Spaces fund and commented that this fund has also earned better than expected interest on investments.

Nancy C. asked where the Moses Lake Shelving project is budgeted. Mike pointed out that the project expenses are being tracked in the general fund under the small equipment line and the repairs and maintenance line.

VIII. Vehicle Replacement Program

Mike shared the details of the Enterprise Fleet Management program. The administration is recommending approval from the board to pursue the program for purchasing replacement vehicles for the district's fleet. Mike pointed out several benefits to the program including more frequent turnover of vehicles resulting in higher sell back rates, quicker and more broad access to vehicle supplies, the ability to track mileage and usage on vehicles more efficiently, minimized time to research and purchase vehicles for district staff, and better maintenance tracking on vehicles.

Denise asked if this program will be budget neutral compared to our current approach to vehicle replacement. Mike said it would, as the district would be getting better returns on vehicles when they are sold. Mike said that the board would be provided an update on vehicle replacement plans in the coming months. Mike also mentioned that the funds for vehicle replacement will come out of money already set aside in the Capital Fund as part of the annual budget process.

Nancy C. asked if there were any concerns with the program as presented. None were voiced and unanimous approval was given to move forward with the Enterprise Fleet Management program.

IX. Executive Director Report

Barbara presented the NCW Libraries Freedom to Read statement to the board for their consideration and endorsement.

Nancy C. mentioned that she has a number of concerns with the statement and asked if the matter should be tabled until she could speak with Barbara about those. Kathleen asked her to share those concerns with the board. Nancy said she didn't like the call out to the ALA Freedom to Read statement. The problem she has is with the current president of the ALA, Emily Drabinski. Nancy shared that Library Journal describes her as the first "Marxist" president of the ALA. Nancy shared that she believes the ALA is a Marxist organization due to the founder. She went on to share that the board should consider the fact that the legislative districts represented by NCW Librarians overwhelmingly voted Republican in the last election and the board should take that into consideration.

There was some confusion about whether or not the ALA was cited in the NCW Libraries Freedom to Read Statement or not.

Denise said that she did not think it was fair to say the ALA is a Marxist organization. That is only Nancy's opinion and Denise does not agree with it. Denise said that this is not a political statement that is being presented, it is about freedom. Denise said she didn't believe the library board needs to consider the voting history of the district and stated that it is a dangerous conversation for the board to be having around this table.

Nancy shared that she was simply trying to have radical candor in the conversation. She shared she

loves the first and second paragraphs of the statement. The third and fourth paragraph she felt sounded too political. She commented that book bans and library closures are not happening in this library district and she felt that the statement implied that patrons don't have the right to have materials reviewed, when the Collection Development policy clearly states they do. Nancy suggested that the statement end with the statement that starts, "We trust our community members..."

Barbara responded that the administration stands behind the Collection Development policy and is not trying to undermine it with this statement. Lisa asked why the administration is proposing putting this statement out. Barbara said that the administration is just asking for the board's endorsement of the statement. Nancy said the statement is close to something she could endorse but she can't in its current form.

Jim commented that he sees the importance of the statement because a county next to NCW Libraries was almost dissolved by ballot initiative, and while none of NCW Libraries branches are under attack now, local school districts are feeling the pressure around these issues.

Kathleen asked where the statement would appear if the board endorses it. Barbara said that it would be on the website.

Denise said that she doesn't see any problem with the portion that begins, "We believe that limiting..." She can understand the concern with the section on book bans, and she recognizes that the board is trying to stay neutral in the debates being had in public. She asked that if the paragraph on book bans is removed does it make the statement stronger or weaker. Kathleen commented that the fourth paragraph which starts, "We believe..." covers what the paragraph before it speaks to. Lisa said that she was fine with striking the third paragraph.

Lisa motioned to formally affirm an amended version of the NCW Libraries Freedom to Read Statement with the third paragraph removed.

Kathleen seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

After the vote Denise added that she felt it was important to acknowledge that the removal of the third paragraph did not imply any tacit disagreement with the principles of the third paragraph, only that the board felt it was redundant. Kathleen agreed that it should not be construed that the board supports any of the actions identified in the third paragraph.

Barbara continued her report by briefly reviewing the role of board members when communicating to the public and encouraged trustees to contact Tim Dillman for any assistance need to coordinate communication.

Barbara reminded the board that she will be meeting with County Commissioners throughout the month of October. She invited trustees to attend as they are able. Nancy recommended meeting with Mayor Koontz in Republic during the visit to Ferry County.

X. Grant County Trustee Applicants Review

Tim briefly reviewed the process of recommending applicants to the County Commissioners for appointment. Four applicants for the upcoming Grant County vacancy were received and the board reviewed the applications and discussed the merits of all the candidates.

The board unanimously agreed to equally recommend Melva Calloway and Carrie Nordberg to the Grant County Commissioners for consideration for the Grant County vacancy appointment.

XI. Reimaging Space Report

Kim Neher, having left the meeting due to an urgent matter, delegated to Tim Dillman to deliver the Reimaging Spaces report. Tim shared that the Moses Lake shelving project was slowed down while staff considered the appropriate collection size. Library Forward will now complete their design work

and finalize a shelving package. Shelving lead times are averaging 12-16 weeks so it is expected that the project won't be completed until the start of the new year. District staff are keeping the Moses Lake Library Foundation updated and the foundation is in contact with the donor.

Tim shared that the Brewster project is underway. The branch is now closed and the contractor has started demolition. Construction is expected to be complete in early November. Shelving will be delivered and installed around early December and the district hopes to have the branch reopened in mid-December.

Design plans for Wenatchee Library phase 2 are complete and the project is out for bid. Bids are due by mid-October and then a construction firm will be selected, with a contract for service anticipated to be presented to the board at the November meeting.

Tim shared that the Friends of the Curlew Library have chosen not to move forward with plans for an addition to the Curlew Library. NCW Libraries will continue working with Library Forward to refresh the current space.

The Peshastin Library is in the conceptual design phase of the project and moving forward according to schedule.

Tim shared that the Librarians at the Ephrata and Soap Lake libraries have gone through the Reimaging Spaces Orientation and completed branch intake forms. Site kick-off meetings are being scheduled with building owners and community engagement events are being planned.

The Friends of the Royal City Library received a \$500,000 grant from the Paul Lauzier Foundation and the city has entered into a lease agreement to allow construction on city property to move forward. The Friends are planning a ground breaking ceremony on Wednesday, September 27th.

Tim gave a report on the partnership NCW Libraries has been in with Thriving Together NCW over the last year to explore the development of Teleservice Access Points (TAPs) at 1-2 libraries in the next month. The hope is for these initial branches to serve as proof of concept sites for private, video-chat enabled patron computers. The long term goal would be to expand this model throughout many of the NCW Libraries branches to allow members of the public an easy way to connect with medical providers, behavioral health providers, social service providers, and other services available via videoconferencing. The board had several questions about this work and was excited by the potential of this work.

XII. Board Discussion

Summer Hess played a promotional video for the NCW Tech Alliance NCW Tech Help program. The video featured staff from the Wenatchee Public Library.

XIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Kathleen motioned to adjourn.

Denise seconded. The motion passed.

Nancy Churchill, Chair

Jill Sheley, Secretary