

**North Central Washington Libraries
Board of Trustees ~ January 16, 2025**

1. Call to order

Board chair Kathleen Allstot called the meeting to order at 1:00pm. The meeting was held in person at the NCW Libraries Distribution Center board room with an option to attend virtually.

Attending trustees included: Chair Kathleen Allstot, Melva Calloway, Nancy Churchill, Nancy Spurgeon, Denise Sorom (virtual), and Jill Sheley (virtual). Attending staff members included: Barbara Walters, Executive Director; Kim Neher, Deputy Director; Mike Githens, Finance Director (virtual); Summer Hays, AD of Programs & Resources; Tim Dillman, AD of Community Libraries; Aaron Floyd, IT Director; Amanda Brack, Communications & Engagement Manager; and Mireya Sanchez, Administrative Assistant

Guests attending as members of the public included: Dominick Bonney, Boo Turner, Rosemary Godwin, and Carolann Gutierrez.

2. Visitors & public comment

Ferry County Resident Rosemary Godwin made a public comment. Ms. Godwin read a statement which was submitted to the board clerk outside the timeframe for inclusion in the board packet. The statement included remarks regarding the Display Policy, a flag policy, and questions posed to the board. The statement will be included in the permanent public record at the conclusion of this meeting.

Ferry county resident Carolann Gutierrez read a statement which was not submitted to the board clerk. The statement included a summary of interactions among patrons and staff of the Republic library, as well as administration team members, and reiterated viewpoints expressed in her attendance of December's meeting in regard to the Pride flag and display.

3. Consent agenda – **motion required*

- Meeting agenda
- Minutes of December 21, 2024, Board meeting
- Payroll & vouchers
 - i. December payroll for \$631,766.71 and Benefits for \$225,301.14
 - ii. December Accounts Payable \$472,926.39

Melva moved to approve the consent agenda. Nancy S. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. December Financials-Mike Githens

Mike reviewed revenue for the month, stating the numbers listed for the county revenue are final. These totals put us at 96.42% of our revenue budget. December payroll was lower, partially due to the way pay periods fell and less use of Library Assistants. Final figures are within 6% of the budget for salaries & wages. The gaps in the budget are due to overbudgeting out of an abundance of caution, as well as vacant positions throughout the year. Public Services had the highest spending rate, facilities were within their normal range; for 2026, we will review historically underspent areas and reallocate as needed. The bottom line is that 91.4% of the general fund revenue was spent.

For the Capital Fund, Mike stated we are within budget on expenses, with most expenditures going towards fleet vehicle replacement.

Reimagining Spaces Project- revenue on this project was over budget due to positive investment interest, while expenses were under budget by a large margin.

Overall for the year, revenue was just over \$16MM, with expenditures at just over \$15.3MM, putting us at 91.4% of the general fund expended.

Mike discussed how the drop in assessed values in Chelan county could affect future budget planning if it continues past this year. This will be closely watched as it could be an indicator that our primary source of revenue may be endangered going forward, especially if the other 4 counties follow suit. If there is a broader economic impact on the remaining counties, Mike is prepared to work with the ELT to make adjustments to future years' budget planning as needed.

Question from Jill: *Has Mike spoken with peers in the industry if there's concern for revenue sources declining with the shifting of the real estate market and valuations?* Mike answered that while he has spoken with peers, there hasn't been a good answer in regard to solutions, especially as the other 4 counties gained value this year which makes the overall market unpredictable.

Question from Denise: *What's used internally to decide how close we spend to the budget?* Mike answered that there is no formal process or recommendations aside from "natural savings" that occur largely due to unpredictable factors such as position vacancies and slow spending in some areas. We have a history of being under budget due to those natural savings and careful monthly considerations. Follow-up question: *What kind of reserves are in place that we can rely upon should property tax income take a nosedive?* Mike answered that we have a \$750K emergency reserve fund, as well as underspending that can carry over. To access the emergency reserve fund, admin would request authorization from the board to use the emergency reserve to keep operations steady as we assess longer term options.

5. **Programs & Services report-** Summer Hayes

- **Digital Services:** Summer reviewed the status of our provision of digital materials. While demand remains high, costs are increasing, and we have no control over the pricing as all digital materials are provided by 3rd parties. The 3rd parties we use for eBooks, eAudiobooks, digital periodicals, music, and more are Hoopla and OverDrive (marketed as Libby). OverDrive charges a digital licensing fee for each title we select – these fees are much higher than we would pay for a physical item and they expire. The most expensive service is Hoopla because it is a cost per circulation model based on package options and tiered pricing. We have purchased the midrange priced package. In order to keep costs down as much as possible with Hoopla, we have placed a daily spending cap of \$826, which limits the maximum number of borrows per day across the system. We also lowered the monthly borrowing limit per patron from 10 borrows to 8. While costs are very high, providing access to digital materials will continue to be a priority. Demand continues to increase, and some titles are only available on digital services. This has been the trend for videos as DVDs stop being manufactured and some titles are being directly released to streaming services. Question from Denise: *Is there a way to offer previews so that borrowers can sample a book or other offering without us being charged for it?* Summer answered that it depends on the title, but an effort to educate staff and the public about licensing and cost to the library has been made through our newsletter and blog. The high cost of the materials is driven by publishers' concerns about potential loss of income from traditional book sales. We do not want to discourage use of our digital services. Question from Jill: *Is OverDrive Libby?* Summer answered yes.
- **Pilot program for uncatalogued paperbacks:** This pilot program has been very successful so far- it provides a broader interest collection and establishes connections with those populations that are either hesitant to use regular library services or whose access is otherwise limited. For example, we have a fair portion of local communities which are home to undocumented folks who might hesitate to provide personal information, and this collection gives them the freedom to still enjoy library services and borrow books on the honor system. Because the titles are uncatalogued, it is expected that some may not be returned. Another population benefiting greatly from this collection are incarcerated patrons, especially those in youth facilities. We have also found opportunities through this program to partner with local outreach organizations, such as the food banks and shelters for unhoused individuals.

6. **Facilities Report-** Amanda Lawson was absent, Kim Neher gave the report

We have reached the end of the pilot period for the Operations Technician position in the Reimagining Spaces project, with it proving very successful. This position played the role of general contracting and carpentry responsibilities through the last few RSP branch remodels and provided vast savings by internally performing multiple jobs that would normally be contracted out, like framing, drywalling, and painting. The decision has been made to hire a 2nd operations technician to help increase the pace and efficiency of the project.

- **Amendment to Resolution 23-05** *requires motion

An amendment to Resolution 23-05 is requested to extend the RSP project allocation for Soap Lake from \$234,812.00 to \$260,812.00 as well as extend the Executive Director's signing authority to execute contracts and make purchases for products and services up to the extended budget amount. The reason for the increase is to replace the shelving that had been at Soap Lake and was moved to the Coulee City branch when that library was forced to relocate due to

building issues. With Soap Lake's closure and remodeling, new shelving will need to be purchased and installed there. A motion was requested to pass this resolution.

Nancy C. moved to approve the amendment to Resolution 23-05. Melva seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

7. **Community Libraries Report-** Tim Dillman

Tim reported that because library activity is usually low and quiet during December the report to the board is lighter on details this month. Tim highlighted the work of a few newer staff members. Nat Heck, Area Manager for the Central Region, has shown a lot of initiative in acquainting themselves with their staff and making connections in the communities. Cynthia Fau, Operations Supervisor at WPL, brought some great experience with her background in behavioral health and is using that to implement and improve customer service standards. Additionally, Tim discussed a retreat that was held for the Senior Branch Leaders' team where important discussions around collaboration and consistency took place, and a good foundation was laid to shift the way the team operates and trains the staff they're responsible for.

8. **HR Report-** Sheila Callihan was absent, Barbara Walters briefly discussed some HR items in her place.

Michael Arciga, Finance Manager, has turned in his resignation effective 1/17/25. This position will be up for review and a decision will be made whether it will be filled as it stands or altered. This will not affect the continued research and pursuit of a new finance software.

9. **IT Report-** Aaron Floyd

Aaron reported that there are no new project completions to report, though progress on the SharePoint transition is moving more quickly now that the cybersecurity project is wrapped up. The data warehouse project is continuing as we look for solutions to store our library data in-house, though it is a lot of data, and research will continue to take time. IT is also working on the Facilities ticketing system, which is going to provide efficiency for that team. The self-checkouts at the branches are showing a lot of use and appear to have had a successful implementation. New public computers have been installed in Curlew and Republic since the reopening of those branches. Additionally, security cameras have been installed in 70% of the branches and those systems are working well. IT is continuing to support Facilities with the RSP. Aaron also reviewed the support request statistics provided in the packet, demonstrating a downturn in requests due to efficiencies found and implemented by dedicated IT staff members.

10. **Executive Director Report-** Barbara Walters

Barbara spoke briefly about the grand reopening of the Curlew branch, and how well that event was attended with positive feedback from the public. Barbara also mentioned the recent media coverage of the December board meeting, and the feedback we have received being primarily positive and supportive of the library district in general. Barbara gave an update on conversations regarding the Narcan dispenser at the Moses Lake Public Library (MLPL), and stated there has been mixed media coverage since the initial article bringing attention to negative reactions was released in November. So far, over 300 packets of Narcan have been dispensed, and multiple lives have been saved both at the library and a nearby park. The high rate of overdoses in the area was the original reason that a machine installation was suggested, and it is showing to be beneficial. Question from Kathleen: *What is Thriving Together?* Kim responded that the organization is what's called an Accountable Community of Health, or ACH organization that is in part funded through the Medicaid program. Reminder to the board that Thriving Together is the owner of the machine, they stock and maintain it, MLPL is just the host for it. Nancy S. spoke about statistics of people who are saved with Narcan going on to recovery and how it can have a positive impact on communities. NCW Libraries is continuing the conversation and working with the City of Moses Lake on mitigating criticism and consideration of whether there will be an alternative location for the machine in the future.

Barbara also spoke about Jill Sheley's notice of resignation from the Board of Trustees. Jill gave a brief update on her plan for stepping down, effective 6/30/25, unless a replacement is found earlier. Jill thanked the rest of the board for their time and dedication and expressed her support for NCW Libraries.

- **Second Review of the Display Policy:** Barbara re-introduced the display policy presented at last month's meetings, this time with a couple of changes that were suggested at the last meeting and in email exchanges with Board members since then. Nancy C. suggested a flag policy be made either part of the display policy, or that a separate one be passed. Board Chair Kathleen clarified that there would be a separate policy that would have to be brought forth and asked that we focus solely on the display policy which was included in the packet only. Nancy then requested and was granted permission from the Board Chair to pass out a copy of a proposed amendment to the display policy she wrote regarding display reconsideration policy and procedure. Because there were trustees attending virtually, Nancy then read the amendment aloud for their benefit. Kathleen asked for clarification on if Nancy is requesting to replace the current reconsideration section in the display policy and with what she had

presented. Nancy responded that this was her intent. There was a reminder from the Board Chair that in order to even consider or discuss this amendment, there would have to be a motion passed to amend the draft policy presented.

Nancy C. made a motion to amend the draft of the display policy to include the new reconsideration language. No second was put forth. The motion failed.

There was a request for any additional questions or discussion regarding the display policy.

Nancy C. then made a motion to table the display policy and form a subcommittee to further consider possible changes to the policy. This does not require a second, however votes are required. There was one vote in favor of tabling, with the remaining trustees against. The display policy will remain in review as presented.

Board Chair Kathleen then asked if there was a motion to approve the display policy as presented.

No Motion was made to adopt the policy as presented. The policy will continue in review at the next meeting.


11. Board Discussion


Nancy C. requested permission from Board Chair Kathleen to put forth for a first read a proposed flag display policy she had written for consideration. Kathleen reminded the trustees that all policies go through the library's legal team before they are ever presented to the board and are not typically written by board members. Nancy then asked if she could put the policy forward as a first step toward considering the policy before it may go through legal review. Kathleen then requested that Nancy share the document for now so that trustees can get an idea of what is being proposed. Nancy then read the proposal out loud and stated she would send it to those attending virtually.

Discussion then turned to whether there was support for the proposed policy or the idea of a flag policy in general. Denise expressed support for at least considering a policy that could provide guidelines and perhaps address concerns shown by the public when it comes to flag displays, as well as the enactment of a general display policy. Nancy S. stated that while she has questions, she would like time to review everything and formulate those and is willing to at least discuss the policies. Jill also expressed support for a discussion but cautioned that adopting a flag policy can also cause unexpected restrictions that could impede the library's ability to allow for flexibility and intellectual freedom. Kathleen then asked how the board would like to approach this discussion, seeing as this is not the typical process for introduction of policy. Denise stated that it would be advisable to stick to best governance practices for organizations such as ours and remember that generally it is the place of the director to draft policy with the involvement of legal counsel where needed and then present that draft document to the board for review, amendment and approval. She requested that the board follow that procedure as usual to ensure that we are in line with typical operations. Jill questioned whether this should really be a priority for staff time, with Denise responding that due to the public's involvement and time spent attending meetings, we do need to respond to that. Discussion turned again to staff capacity, time considerations and legal expenses for policy review. Barbara recommended that the board not write policy as it is within the scope of her position and the typical process is as mentioned earlier in the meeting with that task falling to her and staff followed by legal review. She noted that she would work on drafting a flag policy if it was requested by the board. Consensus among the board members present was that it needs to be done, with Nancy S. emphasizing that at the end of this issue the majority vote of the board needs to be respected and reminded everyone that part of the trustee's role is to support the director and the library, especially as Barbara has been the recipient of most of the negativity surrounding this issue.

Discussion then moved to a timeframe for writing of a flag policy, with the request from Barbara for at least 6 months in light of her heavy workload and other priorities. Given there are two policies currently up for debate, it is agreed that the 6 months is reasonable, and that she will research and draft a policy as per the usual procedure with input from staff and legal counsel. The policy will be presented to the board and go through the proper approval process if it is agreed upon. The display policy will remain separate from any flag policy and will continue in review at the February meeting.

12. Adjournment – 2:54 p.m.


Kathleen Allstot (Feb 24, 2025 15:53 PST)
Kathleen Allstot, Chair


Jill Sheley (Feb 26, 2025 12:26 PST)
Jill Sheley, Secretary









02. DRAFT- January 2025 Minutes (1)

Final Audit Report

2025-02-26

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