

North Central Washington Libraries
Board Minutes

March 18, 2021

I. Call to Order:

Kathleen Allstot called to order the February meeting of the NCW Libraries Board of Trustees at 1:01 PM March 18, 2021. The meeting was held as a Zoom teleconference.

II. Attendees:

The following persons attended via Zoom: Board Members Kathleen Allstot, Katherine Meade, and Denise Sorom, Lisa Karstetter, Jim Mitchell, Nancy Spurgeon, and Jill Sheley. Barbara Walters, Executive Director; Kim Neher, Deputy Director; Mike Githens, Director of Finance; Tracy Hazen, Director of HR; Aaron Floyd, Director of IT; Tim Dillman, Executive Assistant.

Guests:

Sarah Fletcher, Library Systems Manager
Julie Norton, Legal Counsel (Ogden, Murphy, Wallace)
Eric Nordling, Chelan County Resident

III. Consent Agenda:

Kathleen asked if there were questions or corrections for any items in the Consent Agenda which included the:

- a. March Meeting Agenda
- b. Minutes of the February 18 regular board meeting
- c. Payroll & Vouchers
 - i. February Payroll for \$489,166.89 and Benefits for \$200,268.12
 - ii. February Accounts Payable for \$286,554.28
 - iii. Staff Reports

Denise Sorom moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Jim Mitchell seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comment:

The attached public comment (addendum A) from Chelan County resident Eric Nordling was read into the record.

V. City of Wenatchee Purchase and Sale Agreement

Barbara gave an account on the history of the board's consideration of the contract terms. Julie Norton said that Ogden, Murphy, Wallace produced the first draft of the document at the City of Wenatchee's request. This document outlines a takeover or cancellation of previous agreements between NCW Libraries and the City of Wenatchee. The City of Wenatchee made no substantive changes to the document. Julie reiterated that the signing of the document by both parties would cancel the maintenance and use agreements currently in place.

The city has requested 25% of the proceeds from any sale of the building within the next 25 years. The city also wants a commitment that if NCW Libraries were to sell the property within the next 25 years the district would continue to operate a library for the City of Wenatchee in an alternate location.

If the board agrees to the document as written, Ogden, Murphy, Wallace will accept the proposed changes and forward them to the city for city council approval. NCW Libraries would want to attach a written statement to the current agreements referencing the Purchase and Sale Agreement and recognizing the nullification of any previous agreements.

Denise asked why the city had struck out the reference to the additional \$439,000 they would otherwise pay. Julie did not know why this had been stricken, but said it does not substantially change the document.

Kathleen asked if in the event of the district selling the building the City would have first rights at purchase. Julie replied that the agreement does not state this, only that the city would receive 25% of proceeds.

Kathleen also clarified that if the board executes this, the city has the opportunity to get 25% of any sale amount and NCW Libraries agrees to operate a library in the city. Julie confirmed that these are the terms but commented that the requirement to maintain a library may not be enforceable because it is not written into the deed. It would have to be a deed covenant to make it enforceable.

Lisa Karstetter moved that the board should execute the City of Wenatchee Purchase and Sale Agreement.

Nancy Spurgeon seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Update on Goal 6- Sarah Fletcher

Sarah reminded the board of the scope of Goal 6 and gave thanks to the team members who took part in the project. The purpose of Goal 6 was to evaluate the library's Integrated Library System (ILS) from a patron/staff user experience perspective and look for alternative solutions or opportunities for improvement of the current ILS, known as KOHA.

The Goal 6 team started with feedback from staff and patrons. 128 staff gave feedback and 689 patrons responded. Sarah reviewed some common themes from these responses. Sarah shared that the team also looked at the Library Technical Guides Perceptions Surveys which ranks and rates ILS programs. KOHA is routinely in the top of the lists.

Sarah reviewed a handful of other ILS options that could be considered. Sarah explained the benefits and drawbacks of an open-source software vs. a closed source software. The library spends \$12,760 per year on Koha, which includes 24 hour support. The goal 6 team researched competing OPACs (Online Public Access Catalogs). NCW Libraries does not currently have a "discovery layer" which improves the user experience by providing some better user interface features. It would cost \$13,000 to apply the Aspen Discovery "layer" to KOHA. The team also looked at the BiblioCommons discovery layer, which has a very high price tag.

Sarah talked a bit about the support that NCW Libraries currently receives from ByWater Solutions, as well as several improvements that have been available since 2011 but have not been implemented by NCW Libraries.

The Goal 6 team recommends that the district purchase the Aspen Discovery add-on to improve staff and patron experience. The team also recommends Sarah look at the education portal for KOHA to ensure that NCW Libraries is using all the features and options available to the district. Sarah showed some visuals of what the Aspen Discovery changes would look like. The board gave their approval for the recommendations the Goal 6 team had made.

VII. Reciprocal Agreement with Libraries of Stevens County

Barbara reviewed the history of the reciprocal agreement with the Libraries of Stevens County. The agreement was brought to the board and agreed to in 2019. It was never fully implemented due to some delays on the part of Stevens County. When fully implemented, the agreement would allow Ferry County residents who are geographically closer to the Kettle Falls library to take advantage of those services, and it would allow homebound Stevens County residents to access NCW Libraries' Mail Order services.

Kathleen asked how Stevens County would identify residents that need to use the Mail Order services. Sarah responded that the US Postal Service can provide tools to target those residents.

The board agreed that the executive director should move forward with this agreement.

VIII. Strategic Plan Update

Kim gave a brief update on a few of the Strategic Plan Initiatives that have had activity in the last month. Margaret Sullivan came to the region for her final visit as part of the library visioning work. Margaret Sullivan Studio has delivered the first draft of the report and Kim and the Goal 5 team will be reviewing this and providing feedback.

Tracy, Mike, and Erin had the first implementation call with the UKG HRIS support team.

The Graphics department launched the new NCW Libraries website on March 15th. Kim asked the board to provide any feedback as they use the new site.

IX. Executive Report

Barbara provided an executive report that touched on the latest COVID updates, the listening tour that Kim and Barbara are scheduling through March and April, the expanded hours at branches, and the tour of the Winthrop Library construction site.

Jill extended an invitation to all board members for the virtual tour that FOWL is hosting Thursday, March 18 at 6:30 pm. Tracy asked if that invitation could be provided to all NCW Libraries staff and Jill said it would be great to have them attend.

X. Financials- Mike Githens

Mike mentioned that the financial statement is balanced up to February 28th with the Chelan County Treasurer's office. Property tax revenue for the month of February totaled just under \$40,000. Mike pointed out that the order of contracted cities listed on the February financials is missorted making it look like cities owe amounts that are not reflective of their contracts. Mike will sort this out as part of the budget amendment that will be brought to the board later this year.

Under expenses, Mike mentioned that the Personnel budget, if it was evenly divided out for 12 months, would total 16.6% each month. February's payroll expenses came in just under this at 15%. Line 4 (medical expenses) is trending higher than budget. The PERS expense is a bit higher as well due in part to the retirement of a long-term employee. The bottom-line total of payroll and benefits came in at 15.73% of budget for the month of February.

Mike touched on a few highlights in the expenses. Library Materials is underspent but should pick up as the year goes on. IT is also underspent, as well as Professional Services. Mike pointed out that the district should get approximately \$15-20,000 on e-rate reimbursement this year. Line 126 (Postage) was increased this year and is on track. Public Services mileage is high due to paying staff for travel between branches. Line 235 is showing a small charge for gas at Wenatchee Public Library. This is a charge on a gas line that is no longer being used so the district will be looking into getting this closed out. Overall expenses for January and February total 13% of budgeted expenses.

Mike turned the focus to the Strategic Initiative Fund. He pointed out that the first payment for services was made to Margaret Sullivan Studio. The charge for the rebranding goal was for new logo graphics for district vehicles. Mike then showed the board the upcoming contract city payments breakdown and the ending 2020 balances for all district accounts.

Mike gave a brief update on the status of the audit. He expects that it will be wrapped up by the end of the month with no findings anticipated.

XI. Branch Report

Bill gave an update on the recent expansion of branch hours. Every branch will now have some evening and weekend hours.

The new George location is now up and running. The George Librarian Itzel Valle reports new people are coming in including residents of the housing complex in which the library is now located.

The Brewster library is on track to reopen in early April following the flooring replacement and fresh paint provided by the city. A new librarian at Brewster has been hired and the reopening will be timed with his start.

Kathleen asked Bill how the library figured out how many hours to be open. Bill responded that data on community population and FTE available hours were used, and hours at neighboring branches were designed to be complimentary so that communities have several options for where and how to access the library.

XII. HR Report

Tracy gave an update on Human Resources' activities over the last month. The department has been heavily focused on recruiting. The new hire for the Brewster library brings an MLIS and Spanish speaking skills. HR is also in the final stages of interviews for Moses Lake customer service tech, Leavenworth Librarian, and the Grand Coulee Librarian.

The district just completed the third of three sessions with Cultures Connecting for DEI/Anti-Bias training.

The Human Resources Department will be making stops at several branches throughout March and April to say hi to staff and connect.

XIII. Announcements

Tim reminded board members that efforts to plan a 2021 Board Retreat are underway and he will need any dates of conflict from board members to set a date for the retreat.

Jill asked how the board would respond to the public letter read at the beginning of the meeting. Kathleen answered that it was a matter of public record now, and that administration had already provided a response to the patron.

The April meeting of the NCW Libraries Board of Trustees is scheduled for April 15th at 1:00pm. The meeting will be held via Zoom Teleconference.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Allstot, Board Chair

Katherine Meade, Board Secretary

Addendum A- Public Comment from Eric Nordling, Chelan County

Our nation suffered dozens of deaths and billions in property damage due to racist-inspired violent riots last year. Mob-like behavior and physical threats is in part incited when libraries promote books by (for example) Layla Saad and her content that "white silence is violence." When you promote a book that says someone is violent for not adopting a particular ideology, you provide cover for people acting this way. Just think about it for a moment. The logic goes something like this. If a person doesn't subscribe to a particular brand of "anti-racism," then they are violent and individuals are therefore justified in censoring them, stopping them, surrounding them, hurting them, etc. Your book by Layla Saad has nothing to do with black history or cultural awareness. Instead, it is pure racial division and hatred presented under the guise of cultural awareness and black history.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/watch/white-silence-is-violence-a-woman-was-surrounded-by-protesters-at-a-restaurant-in-dc/vp-BB18oFP7>

<https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/514251-how-silence-is-violence-threatens-true-free-speech-and-public-civility>

<https://reason.com/2020/08/25/black-lives-matter-protesters-dc-silence-is-violence-white-people/>

Library staff leadership has been contacted on multiple occasions about the promotion of this type of material and have yet to provide a satisfactory response. The public library in the capacity of serving the public should (at the very least) be able to answer the following:

- Who or what group / committee decides which books to promote?
- What is the criteria for book promotion selection?
- Is racist or otherwise offensive material disqualifying in terms of book promotion?
- Would the library please stop promoting Layla Saad's book?
- Would the library consider promoting a book about the life of Clarence Thomas during black history month 2022?

Thank you,

Eric Nordling