

North Central Washington Libraries
Board Minutes

April 15, 2021

I. Call to Order:

Kathleen Allstot called to order the April meeting of the NCW Libraries Board of Trustees at 1:01 PM April 15, 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, Nancy Spurgeon, and Jill Sheley. Barbara Walters, Executive Director; Kim Neher, Deputy Director; Mike Githens, Director of Finance; Aaron Floyd, Director of IT; Tim Dillman, Executive Assistant.

Guests:

Julie Norton, Legal Counsel at Ogden, Murphy, Wallace

III. Consent Agenda:

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

- a. April Meeting Agenda
- b. Minutes of the March 18 regular board meeting
- c. Payroll & Vouchers
 - i. March Payroll for \$497,365.89 and Benefits for \$191,985.65
 - ii. March Accounts Payable for \$262,379.44
 - iii. Staff Reports

Denise Sorom moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Katherine Meade seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

IV. Board Training-Julie Norton

Julie presented information as a refresher on the roles and responsibilities of public boards. The NCW Libraries Board of Trustees is the policy making body of the district and is charged as a fiduciary to appropriately steward the tax revenue from residents of the service area through the approval and oversight of an annual budget. Julie reviewed a memo included in the board packet that was provided by Ogden, Murphy, Wallace. Julie clarified that the Executive Director is the only library employee overseen by trustees. Julie communicated that when receiving any communications from employees of the district, trustees should send them to the Executive Director and not respond. If contacted by employees about work conditions, board members should thank them, forward the message to the Executive Director, and perhaps discourage contact. Julie reminded trustees that any discussion with other trustees could be in violation of the Open Meetings Act. Julie said that the board should also not respond to media inquiries.

Katherine asked if board members could respond with a comment like "Thank you, I am

forwarding your message.” Julie said yes because it shows the message was received.

Denise asked if employees are aware of the whistleblower policy. Julie answered that it is usually in the personnel guidelines near the front and follows state law. Denise asked in follow up how to respond if an employee is not comfortable reporting concerns to Barbara. Julie responded that they need to follow reporting guidelines.

V. Executive Director's Report

Barbara presented on the Director’s Report that was provided to the board. She summarized the efforts made to recognize staff during National Library Week. Barbara notified the board that her and Kim are finishing the last of the listening tour visits this month and will then meet to prioritize next steps. Barbara also relayed concerns the administration had received from a resident in Chelan, as well as unrelated concerns from the President of the Grand Coulee Area Friends of the Library.

Denise asked if the board could start to entertain in-person meetings in the short-term future, perhaps having an in-person meeting quarterly. Katherine agreed it would be good to meet in person but have flexibility to attend virtually. Nancy also agreed. She suggested the administration prioritize the ability to do hybrid meetings.

VI. Financial Report

Mike reported that the State Auditor’s Office held the exit meeting for the library’s 2018-2019 audit on Monday. Mike reminded the board that statutorily the administration is required to ensure that board members have a copy of the final report, and he encouraged them to contact him or Barbara if they have any questions. The audit was clean. Moving forward the audits will happen annually and cover the previous year. Mike expressed that one area where the district will give focus before the next audit is on the preparation of MOU’s with each of the partnering Friends groups. Mike stated that there is also a policy that the district needs to have in place by the next audit so that will be brought to the board soon.

Mike said that looking at the March end of month financials provides a good 3-month snapshot to see how expenditures compare to budget. On the revenue side, the district received more tax revenue than expected in the month of March. Also, some money came in from the cities who contract for service. Mike also pointed out that the district got a small rebate from credit card purchases and fleet cards which appeared in the miscellaneous revenue account. The total YTD revenue is at 5.73% of budget.

In the area of expenses Salary and Wages are at 22% of overall budget which is a good place to be at this point in the year. In March, several Library Assistants were brought back, but it only shows up in the second half of the month due to the close of pay periods. Mike said that their wages will start to hit the books from this point forward. Mike spoke briefly about unemployment. There has been recent news that some employers were seeing their unemployment costs go up. This does not affect the library as it is on a reimbursement basis. The district pays for unemployment and then gets reimbursed for the actual costs distributed.

Mike pointed out that library books and materials were budgeted at around \$2 million. It is underspent at this point in the year. Mike said he is keeping an eye on it and expecting it to uptick as the year goes on. It is also an area that will get more scrutiny as the 2022 budget is developed. Mike notified the board that one of the recent changes made is that hold ratios for digital materials have been lowered.

The new mail order catalog is about to go out. Summer always tends to trend down for mail order but the district has plans to try to publicize the service more.

The total expenditures for the district year to date are 19% of the budgeted expense, slightly under where the district should be at the end of the 1st quarter.

Mike reviewed the expenses for the Strategic Initiative Fund. The first payment was made for the HRIS system. Mike also pointed out that the total balance of funds managed by the district total \$16.9 million.

Speaking on preparations for the 2022 budget, Mike let the board know that the executive team will begin discussing the broad strokes of the budget in June and then will begin to meet with department managers. The 2022 revenue sources are look very promising, with aggregate assessed values rising. Mike anticipates that the local economy will not see any indicators of inflation and the district will be able to take the 1% increase on the levy rate without a statement of substantial need.

Denise asked Mike if the fact that the salaries and wages budget is close to being on track with budget indicates that the district is close to being fully staffed or if there are more positions remaining to be filled. She also questioned if by the end of the 2nd quarter the salaries and wage expenses would be close to 50%. Mike answered that there are still a few remaining positions to be filled. He would expect the salaries and wages to be around 49% at the end of 2nd quarter.

VI. Strategic Initiative Update

Kim reported that Margaret Sullivan's team has submitted their first draft of their visioning work report and the Kim and her team are reviewing it. There are a few projects that are preparing to be launched in 2021. The goal for a set of core technologies in the branches and the deployment of Microsoft Office in branches is getting ready. Aaron Floyd is preparing things in the background and Kim has explored the possibility of utilizing grant funds from PLA and Microsoft to pilot Microsoft Office in some branches. On the goal of developing a culture of service excellence, Kim shared that as follow up to the visioning work that has been done with Margaret Sullivan, the next step will be to develop customer experience principles with branch staff. This is partly related to furniture, library layout and design, and wayfinding, but it is also related to how staff interact with the public and how they view their role as library staff.

Kim updated the board on projects that were previously being led by other staff members that have been handed off. The data project that Chad Roseburg had been working on will be picked up by Library Systems Manager Sarah Fletcher and she will work with Aaron Floyd on completing that project. The HRIS project which Tracy Hazen was the lead on will be continued by Mike. Mike told the board that the HRIS is currently planned to launch in August. If there is a need to slow that timeline down it will be. Mike added that Finance will parallel in the current payroll system for 2 pay periods. Mike said everything is going along quite well at this time.

VII. Branch Report

Bill went through the written report that was shared with the board. He gave a verbal introduction of Daniel Blanchard, the newly hired Branch Librarian at the Brewster Library. The reopening of the Brewster Library, following a refresh on paint and flooring, is targeted for the week of April 24th.

Bill spoke on some of the logistical challenges related to Phase 3 adjustments. The majority

of the branches were able to increase guest capacity and many staff were able to selectively add furniture back into their branch.

VII. IT Report

Aaron reintroduced himself to the board and began to walk through his written report. Aaron told the board about the recent migration of KOHA to cloud support rather than being internally managed by IT staff. As the most mission critical software that NCW Libraries manages, the cloud-based solution is a much better option as it ensures the co-locating of files, regular updating of equipment to maintain the data, and over 20 (ByWater) staff monitoring it.

The other major project that that IT department has been focused on is standardizing the WiFi at all branches to give uniform names and login to the networks.

Denise asked Aaron how many staff are working in IT. Aaron responded that he oversees 3 other staff members. Kathleen asked how much of their work on behalf of branches can be handled remotely from Wenatchee. Aaron said that Mike Bull and Steven Berg spend a fair amount of time traveling. All four staff members will be teaming up in the coming months to travel to branches to do some network equipment clean up. Jill asked Aaron to speak to how the work for IT projects get prioritized. Aaron shared a prioritization matrix and walked through the spectrum from mission critical to low priority.

VIII. Executive Session

The board entered an executive session at 2:23pm pursuant to RCW 42.30.110 (i). The session was set for 15 minutes. The board came out of executive session at 2:35pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled on May 13, 2021 via Zoom teleconference.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Allstot, Chairwoman

Katherine Meade, Secretary

