

October 15, 2018, BLT Agenda Item Comments

These comments on Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees (BLT) agenda items are submitted by:
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Item 1. Minutes of the September 17, 2018 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

1. I continue to think the better way of referring to trustees in the minutes is "Trustee," as it once was, rather than the recent practice of saying "Board Member." Not only was "Trustee XXX" the custom for previous minutes of the BLT and the Newport Beach governing council in the years when it was a [Board of Trustees](#), but think, for example, of the County Board of Supervisors. One speaks of "Supervisor Steel," not "Board member Steel."
2. **Page 4** (handwritten 7), paragraph 3: "*In response to Chair Ray's query, Board Member Johnson-Tucker **said** the subcommittee work is complete.*" (or, "**verified**" or ??)
3. **Page 4** (handwritten 7), paragraph 6: "*Motion made by Vice Chair Watkins, seconded by Board Member Johnson-Tucker, and carried (5-0-0-0) to adopt revisions to the Study Room Policy as discussed during the meeting and to **direct staff to present a revised policy to the Board of Library Trustees in October for approval.***" [emphasis added]
 - a. I would note a [Policy NBPL 13](#), dated September 17 and incorporating staff's understanding of the changes the trustees adopted for further consideration, appears to have been posted to the NBPL website without final approval by the BLT. In addition, approval of the policy in its final form is not on the present (October) agenda, even though the September agenda packet recommended no changes, and those "adopted" by the BLT were made verbally and had not been seen in their final written form .
 - b. While staff efficiency is generally to be admired, and while it's possible the motion is misstated in the draft minutes, taking the initiative to do things in contradiction to the direction provided by formal public motion of the Board seems less admirable. In short, the policy has been posted without the BLT approval required by the September 17 motion.
4. **Page 5** (handwritten 8), paragraph 4: "*Motion made by Vice Chair Watkins, seconded by Board Member Johnson-Tucker, and carried (5-0-0-0) to incorporate revisions to the Expressive Use Areas Policy as discussed during the meeting.*"
 - a. Again, a modified [Policy NBPL 9](#), dated September 17, has been posted.
 - b. Although the BLT authorized the posting, the part of the motion that "*On the website, the location links should be labeled to correspond to Item 2 in the policy*" (paragraph 1 on the same page) appears to have been ignored.
 - i. "Item 2" in the rules and regulations refers to "Exhibits "A", "A2", "B", "C" and "D".

- ii. It is not at all apparent that, for example, the link near the top of the page to “Lower Level” is really a link to “Exhibit A: Lower Level” and so on.
 - c. In short, staff again does not appear to have completely followed the direction given by formal public motion of the Board.
- 5. **Page 5** (handwritten 8), Item 9, paragraph 1, last sentence: “*The Public Works Department had the contractor install a layer of cork in the second-floor hallway near the fire station living quarters and replace the vinyl composition, floor tiles with carpet.*” [I would find this easier to read without the comma.]
- 6. **Page 5** (handwritten 8), Item 9, paragraph 2: “*Board Member Coulter shared his conversation with Mark Vukojevic wherein Mr. Vukojevic agreed to arrange a tour of the project for the Board of Library Trustees.*” [There is nothing wrong with this. In fact it is commendable for the BLT to take an interest in the construction. However, if a majority of the BLT takes a tour together, the tour would need to be noticed as a special meeting of the Board to which the public is invited (something that sounds like a good idea – and, as I recall, took place during the Central Library expansion construction). If a public event is not what is wanted, the trustees should tour individually and share their thoughts about the project at the BLT’s regular noticed meetings.]
- 7. **Page 7** (handwritten 10), paragraph 1, last sentence: “*The plans could then be prepared for public ~~for~~ comment.*”
- 8. **Page 7** (handwritten 10), Item 12, sentence 3: “*He will present staff’s customer service goals to the Board for comment ~~in~~ after the retreat.*” [I remain puzzled by this item. The September *Library Activities* report appeared to say the proposed goals would be presented to the BLT **before** the staff retreat, and they indeed appear to be presented in the present *Activities* report, although maybe not for comment? See additional comment on Item 3, below.]

Item 2. Customer Comments

Comment 1: I was not aware the **OC Law Library** provided legal advice. Indeed, if I am recalling correctly they have signs saying they don’t, and they continue to have a disclaimer to that effect on their website (at the bottom of [their policies page](#)). Is a “law clinic” staffed by lawyers a service the new [Director Starkey](#) has committed to providing? Or is our patron being misinformed?

Item 3. Library Activities

- 1. The departure of the Credit Union of Southern California comes as a surprise.
 - a. Shouldn’t this have been on the agenda for discussion by the trustees?
 - b. Does Director Hetherington remain interested in developing it as an exhibition space?

2. Library Administration Annual Retreat:

- a. As indicated above, I remain confused as to whether: (1) the initiatives listed are being presented for BLT discussion (they don't seem to have been agendaized that way), (2) are intended to be announced at the retreat as new library initiatives, or (3) are intended to be refined by other staff members at the retreat and then brought back to the BLT for their approval before being implemented.
- b. If, of those possibilities, it is "(2)" then it is not clear to me exactly which BLT policies these implement and, while the initiative behind the initiatives is appreciated, it bothers me that staff seems to be creating policy direction rather than following it.
- c. Regarding "**Reference Collection Evaluation and Redesign**," much as I dislike the loss of physical reference books, I generally agree with the sentiments expressed. However, I have long been bothered by the vastly greater access to online reference and scholarly information provided to visitors to our public *university* libraries (and, I believe to registered public university students, even when off campus) compared to that available to visitors to *city and county* libraries. Given the state's commitment to universal access to information, if there is some legal reason general visitors to city libraries can't be allowed to tap into those state resources, is it possible city reference librarians could be granted such privileges so they could provide access to materials the public can see but not access via the university databases – much in the vein of the reference librarians' traditional role of finding information for patrons, but in a way less cumbersome and without the expense of our present, vastly-underutilized Inter-Library Loan process. I think an initiative to explore that possibility would be a good one.
- d. Regarding "**Outreach**," in addition to bringing children to the libraries, and promoting Summer Reading at the schools, I can also see a role in library staff visiting schools on "career days" to explain what they do and generate interest in young minds. It would seem a good experience both for staff and the children. Does NBPL do that now? If not, there could be a form to request such visits.
- e. Regarding "**The Big Picture**," greater exposure of NBPL staff to the BLT is great, but I think it is equally true, and very clear, that the public (including the library-using portion of it) is not well aware of or engaged in the activities of the BLT. While that is the BLT's problem to solve, not staff's, I think greater public involvement and interest in the matters before the BLT would benefit staff by giving them a better sense they are getting direction from the community as a whole, and not just from a tiny handful of people.

Item 5. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List

In the right-hand column, there is a discrepancy in the dates of the January and February 2019 meetings as stated in the “Agenda Item” section (top) versus the “Policy Review” section (bottom).

Item 6. Mariners Branch Update

1. As noted at the September BLT meeting, I have heard more than one member of the community express surprise at the absence of areas for group study – although where they might go is not obvious.
2. Regarding the possibility of “*reconfiguring the public computer areas*” under “Comments” on handwritten page 34, I’m not sure what that might entail, but the current layout is very nice, and I would say more comfortable to use (with a greater sense of privacy) than that at the Central Library. Unless the purpose of the reconfiguration is to accommodate more terminals, I don’t see a reason to abandon what is there (although some might like the adjustable chairs at Central better than the wooden ones at Mariners).
3. The pictures on handwritten pages 35-36 of the effort involved in the re-carpeting are impressive, but I remain puzzled how a larger area was redone in the same time at Central without the disruption to service. And I believe the entire Jorgensen Room was later redone in just a day or two.

Item 8. Corona del Mar Branch Project Update

In paragraph 2, the term “*structural observation*” is a specialist term I had not encountered before. I [gather](#) it is similar to “*inspection*” but less rigorous and has more to do with verifying compliance with plans than with building codes?

Item 10. Donation to the Newport Beach Public Library

The mechanism for accepting small gifts is a continuing problem.

Although [NBPL 3](#) implies the BLT has complete authority to accept gifts, [City Charter Section 708\(f\)](#) clearly states that the BLT’s acceptance is “*subject to the approval of the City Council.*”

Even without that additional step, I have to guess the cost of processing the present gift of \$25 exceeds the value of the gift.

Where is the check now? Has it been cashed? To follow the letter of the Charter, could staff aggregate the small gifts into a fund (like a savings account) with an understanding the money would be returned if acceptance was not achieved? Could the balance in the account then be accepted, and acknowledged, at intervals, as is done with the contributions flowing through the Friends and Foundation?

Item VII. Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items

The September 17 minutes (page 4, paragraph 4), in the discussion of the Study Room Policy, mention the **Charles Sword Meeting Room** (formerly “Reading Room”?) and the absence of any Board policy regarding it. It would seem something about it needs to be added to the [Library Meeting Rooms Policy](#) (“Council” [Policy I-7](#) – slated for review at the BLT’s December meeting), as well as about use of the “staff conference room” adjacent to the Media Lab – which the public might similarly wonder about.

However, the Sword Room seems different since it’s been my observation the door is normally left open with no clearly posted rules about its use. It’s unclear to me if in the absence of a reservation groups or individuals making use of it would be chased out for violating what seems to be staff’s informal policy about it.

The Trustees may also wish to question why Policy I-7 is a City Council policy at all, since it appears to consist entirely of rules and regulations for the administration of library facilities, and the making of such rules is a power given to the BLT (rather than the Council) by [City Charter Section 708\(a\)](#).