

May 20, 2019, BLT Agenda 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 April 23, 2019 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

Page 3 (handwritten 6): “*Vice Chair Watkins related that he had provided staff with revisions to correct the title of the **Policy** Meeting Rooms Policy and to note the Charles Sword Room is located in Central Library.*” [?? Since this comes, in the minutes, under the discussion of “**Study Room** Policy – NBPL-13,” it is unclear what correcting the title of the **Meeting Rooms** Policy refers to. Possibly the minutes should just say it was a suggestion “*to correct the title of the policy*”?]

Item 2. Customer Comments

The number of comments received system wide, 3, seems very small. By comparison, when the Board met last May it saw 11.

Could this be due, in part, to the absence of an option to submit comments on paper at the facilities? At least at the Mariners Branch, the display asking for comments, with cards, has disappeared.

In that connection, when a comment is indicated as having been received by “email,” does that mean it via the “[Contact Us](#)” form on the NBPL website, or by some other means?

For example, the comment about a NBPL librarian posted to the American Library Association’s National Library Workers Day “[Galaxy of Stars](#)” website (and not counted in the “3” noted above) appears to have been relayed to NBPL by the ALA. But since such comments are, by definition, flattering, it seems a bit inappropriate to present it under this agenda heading unless it is staff’s intention to bring to the Board *all* comments about NBPL, and its personnel, found in all media, and whether favorable or unfavorable.

As examples, there are two recent reviews on [Yelp](#), the content of which may not have been automatically forwarded to institution being commented about, regarding the Mariners Branch Library. One compliments the long public work tables at Mariners, a feature that I believe is being purposely *removed* from the new CdM Branch. The other wonders why NBPL doesn’t offer miniature keychain versions of its physical library card (something some other systems apparently do). Comments regarding the Central Library frequently mention the sanctioning of eating throughout the reading areas, which many seem to find distracting.

All that said, should the Board be more proactive in seeking comment about the library, independent of what is brought to it by library staff?

Item 3. Library Activities

It is surprising to me that the “Wheelhouse List for Library Trustees” (handwritten page 14) doesn’t include the grand opening of the new Orange County Public Library branch at Lions Park in Costa Mesa from 10 a.m. to noon on [Friday, May 24](#). For quite a few Newporters, it will be closer than any of the branches offered by NBPL, and may become their preferred facility. Even if it did not, I would think the Trustees would have an interest in keeping abreast of what “the competition” is doing.

For those with interests that go beyond the popular collections favored by NBPL, I assume OCPL will be continuing their practice of offering [interlibrary loans](#) at a much more affordable price (“*OC Public Libraries does not charge for the service*”).

Regarding the National Library Week activities (handwritten page 14), I don’t know if the storytime children enjoy guest readers compared to the normal library personnel, but is there some reason none of the guest readers were scheduled for the Mariners Branch (which I believe had five storytimes during the week)?

Item 4. Expenditure Status Report

With the City Council’s approval of the City budget on the very near horizon, it might be noted that, in addition to the expenditures reported, the flip side of the budget is the revenues collected.

Especially with the Friends Meeting Room policy on their June 11 agenda, I would be curious to know how much revenue the City earns from rental of the Friends Room.

Beyond that, if the present report is as of May 1 (which it says it is), that would leave two months (May and June) of the twelve in the fiscal year, so available funds should be around one-sixth of the total amount budgeted. By that standard, salaries and benefits appear to have a substantial excess left, well above what would be expected after ten months (\$1.5 million vs. \$1.0 million expected). Does this have to do with a lag in the payments? Or have personnel costs been this much less than planned?

Many other line items also deviate greatly from the expectation that one-sixth of the originally budgeted amount should remain as of May 1.

Item 5. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List

The upper part of the list shows a considerable amount of bunching, with many items listed in some months and few or none in others. It would seem they could be distributed more evenly. Among other things, the “Annual Budget - Preliminary Review” and “Annual Budget – Approval” (which normally would occur at different meetings) have been scheduled for the same day (Feb 18, 2020), which seems odd.

It would also seem the “Branch Update - Corona del Mar,” if that represents a routine on-site review, could be moved to a later date so there will be some real experience with the site to be discussed. Perhaps it could be swapped with the Mariners Branch visit?

In the lower part of the list, the Study Room/Sword Room Policy ([NBPL-13](#)) has inexplicably dropped off the list for future review, as has the Friends Room Policy (the new [NBPL-14](#), formerly [L-7](#)).

[NBPL 1](#) (“NBPL Use Policy” – which is different from [CC I-1](#)), [4](#) (“Children in the Library”) and [8](#) (“Display and Distribution of Materials”) also seem to be missing.

Item 7. Wi-Fi Usage at NBPL Compared to Other Libraries

[Item 10](#) on the April 23 BLT agenda bore the identical title but had a very slightly different description.

In my view, the present agenda announcement does not give the public adequate notice of what the discussion is intended to be about. Only from reading the present staff report and the draft minutes of the April 23 meeting does one discover the Board, at that meeting, appears to have asked staff to consider re-instituting an “authentication” procedure: that is, requiring the entry of a library card number to access the NBPL Wi-Fi network.

I am pleased to see the Director’s recommendation is to *not* re-institute an authentication requirement. But I think few would realize that is planned for discussion.

The draft minutes of the April 23 meeting of the BLT at the Balboa Branch (Item 1, above, which meeting I was unable to attend due to its being held simultaneously with a City Council meeting at City Hall), staff reiterated its written assertion that “*Wi-Fi is available from 6:00 a.m. until one hour after closing for each Branch.*” While this may express staff’s sincere belief, the “*until one hour after closing*” part is certainly not true of the Mariners Branch. More precisely, the Wi-Fi network appears to be “on” 24/7 at all locations, but public access to it is blocked much of the time, and the schedule of programmed blockage is significantly different at the branches than at Central. Since the schedule of Wi-Fi availability does not seem to be part of any Board policy it is unclear if library staff thinks it has direction on this from the Trustees, or not.

Item 8. Corona del Mar Branch Project Update

During the planning of this branch, I recall suggesting it would be helpful for the Board (and public) to see visualizations of the interior design. I do not recall any having been produced.

The construction images on handwritten pages 28 and 29 are, therefore, a bit of a surprise, as I thought it had been agreed there would be eye-level windows in the walls, particularly in the rear wall facing what I believe will be the future childrens storytime area. It is good to see the adult reading area facing Marigold will be light and airy like the childrens program area at Central. It is a bit sad the CdM children will be placed in a windowless corner, more like the storytime box at Mariners. It might be rationalized that the absence of uncontrolled external

stimulation is a positive thing for children, allowing them to better focus on the library presentations and materials, but that is not a rationalization I would buy into.

Item VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Several non-agenda comments are woven into the preceding commentary:

1. I don't know if this is partially addressed by the new wayfinding kiosk at Central, but I think the Board should consider directing staff to reinstate public comment opportunities in all the libraries, including a return of the paper comment cards.
2. I think the Board should regularly ask for a listing of revenues received by the library.
3. I think the Board should adopt a clear policy for the intended hours of access to the Wi-Fi network and see that it is implemented as intended (at all branches, not just Central).

Additional non-agenda comments:

1. As has been previously suggested, if the Board is interested in patron feedback on specific topics it might be possible (in addition to paper survey cards) to make an optional survey question part of the Wi-Fi and internet log in process. This would also provide away to bring non-electronic library services to the attention of its electronic patrons.
2. With the Board's recent changes to the Central Library's meeting and study room policies, staff may wish to consider revising its on-line (and paper) [descriptions of Central's floorplan](#). For example, the Conference Room (the map confusingly shows two) is no longer available for "small civic meetings" and the award-winning Sword Room is available only by reservation. More generally, the floor plan appears somewhat out-of-date, and the location of such things as the Holds Shelf are not indicated.
3. With the new Friends Room Policy going to the City Council on June 11, I believe the request will be to ask the Council to permanently delete City Council [Policy I-7](#) ("Library Meeting Rooms"), leaving just [Policy B-5](#) ("Vincent Jorgensen Community Room in Library"). I am curious to know if in requesting such action the Trustees will be implicitly relinquishing all claim to any future rights, interest in or special relationship to the Jorgensen Room, in contradiction to the construction restrictions previously noted, and declaring it to be exclusively a Recreation and Senior Services facility (as implied by B-5)? Or will the BLT be retaining an advisory role with regard to Council Policy B-5 (which I doubt has ever been reviewed by the Board)?
4. The Board of the Newport Beach Restaurant Business Improvement District (comprising all retail food-serving businesses in Newport Beach) will be [meeting](#) on Wednesday. The previous Library Director was very "into" food-related events for both adults and children (the "What's Cooking at the Library?" series, among others). Such things seem to have disappeared entirely from the library calendar, despite it having been claimed at the time that they were "very popular." I am curious to know if the Library Board or staff have any interest in reviving such events?