

June 17, 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 May 20, 2019 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

Suggested correction:

Page 3 (handwritten 6): first full paragraph, sentence 2: “However, **eliminating limiting** Wi-Fi service could alienate patrons.” [see preceding sentence -- Director Hetherington was discussing the expected ramifications of limiting service, not eliminating it]

Comments:

Page 3 (handwritten 6): paragraph 2: “CASSIE has a complementary program for Wi-Fi called SPOT. Staff purchases Wi-Fi licenses from CASSIE to access SPOT.”

I continue to be puzzled why NBPL has to pay a third party for “licenses” if the basic access is being provided via the [CENIC network](#). [CASSIE](#) provides an excellent software solution for allotting time on the library’s own desktop and laptop computers in a fair and efficient way (far superior to the paper “wait list” the reference librarians previously attempted to maintain). But offering Wi-Fi access for patrons’ personal devices does not involve a wait list, so I am unable to fathom any necessary connection to CASSIE. Allowing Wi-Fi access from personal devices would seem something the City’s internal IT Department should be able to manage at no outside cost, and with no limitations imposed by a third party. In fact, they provide what I assume are unlimited free connections at City Hall and Mariners Park and it seems unlikely to me they need “SPOT” licenses to do so. As a result, I have to wonder if SPOT is actually doing anything to justify its cost and the restrictions it imposes.

Page 3 (handwritten 6): Item 9 (“Lecture Hall Update”), paragraph 1: “During its first meeting in June, the City Council will decide whether to fund the architect’s work.”

The Council approved the City’s [Capital Improvement Program for Fiscal Year 2020](#), as presented, as part of [Item 21](#) at its June 11, 2019, meeting. It designates design, environmental analysis and permitting of a Central Library Lecture Hall as Project No. 19F11 on page 2 (page 15 of the 155 page PDF). \$570,000 has been budgeted for that purpose. That figure includes carryovers from the present year of \$20,000 in contributions and \$50,000 previously budgeted.

A photo of the Central Library is also used to illustrate Project 20F02 on page 5, the Facilities Maintenance Master Plan Program for FY20, for which the Council has budgeted \$2,500,000. Since the Facilities Maintenance Master Plan seems to be an internal spreadsheet of the Public Works Department that is not readily accessible to the public, it is not known (by me) how much of the budgeted amount is expected to go toward library maintenance. The Trustees may wish to enquire. They may also want to seek clarity as to whether the funding for these efforts is charged to the departments or comes from some other source.

I have not seen anything budgeting funds for the eventual replacement of the Balboa Library and Fire Station.

Page 4 (handwritten 7): Item 10 ("Library Services"): "*On June 11, an item regarding the policy for the Friends Room will be on the City Council's consent calendar.*"

To the best of my knowledge, this did not happen (see [June 11 Council agenda](#)). The "Wheelhouse List" of Item 3 suggests this is now scheduled for June 25.

Item 2. Customer Comments

The question about whether the library accepts used books is so frequently asked (#4 this month) one has to wonder if the answer is being adequately disseminated.

The information about reading current issues of the *LA Times* and *Orange County Register* through ProQuest (#5) is useful. I don't think it's well known. Attempts to access them directly on the internet via the library's computers or Wi-Fi are generally blocked by the papers' pay walls. Unfortunately, the most recent issue of the *Orange County Register* offered on ProQuest is Apr 12, 2019. The Register *does* publish a very useful online facsimile of its printed pages, which seems to be available at no charge and includes the current day's issue +at: <https://ocregister-ca.newsmemory.com/>

Regarding the comment program in general, it is good to see an increase in the number of comments, including several submitted on "comment cards." As the Trustees are likely not aware, physical comment cards have been discontinued at the Mariners Branch, with patrons having suggestions apparently expected to find the [Contact Us](#) section of the library website.

Item 3. Library Activities

Page 1 ("Trustee Jill Johnson-Tucker"): Agreed! Jill has been an exceptional Trustee. As to her replacement, the Council is in the middle of that, with four nominees to fill the two vacancies (the other "vacancy" being the seat held by Chair Ray) having been confirmed by the full Council as Item 20 on June 11, with the two final selections expected to be made on June 25.

As one who has attended BLT meetings since 2009, and applied continuously for membership on the Board since then, I am, naturally, a bit disappointed to have been deemed unqualified for consideration for all those years, but trust Jill's replacement will be someone more competent to fill the role than I.

I do continue to find concerning the near total absence of the general public at the Board meetings. The lack of public interest in the Board meetings has been said to be an indication of a well-run library. But to me, it indicates a lack of independent interest by the Board in what the public thinks of the services rendered.

Page 1 ("Wish List gifts"): The ever-increasing ability of the Friends group to support the library is gratifying. As to the Foundation, I remain concerned that what I suspect is a diminishing contribution in relation to the amount of money raised indicates an organization created as a

conduit for cash donations to support *library* construction and activities is increasingly using the money raised under that banner to fund *its own* independent programming, under its own control, and often in competition with programs the Trustees might otherwise be overseeing. This concern is heightened by the incompatibility of the current system with the Cooperative Agreement between the Board and the Foundation (Tab V in the BLT Manual). Under that agreement, unrestricted donations are supposed to be separately reported, and their use is supposed to be the sole province of the BLT.

Page 2 (“Facilities Update” – handwritten 13): The repairs to the in-ground lights in front of the Jorgenson Room at the Mariners branch library is much appreciated. For many years, the main bicycle rack closest to the entrance had been in total darkness after sunset.

Item 4. Expenditure Status Report

Since (with the exception of donations) unspent budgeted amounts are returned to the general fund (and lost for library purposes), with less than a single month left in the current budget year, one might hope that the “Available Budget” would be similar to the typical monthly spending, so each line item would end the year with zero balance.

Of the budget, the largest single line item after salaries and benefits is the inter-departmental “Internal Service Fund” expenses. The Trustees might want to review those in more detail to be sure they agree they are appropriate.

Item 5. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List

I believe the review of “[NBPL 7 Sound Lab Use Policy](#)” needs to be moved up from “Nov 16, 2020” since, as indicated in the draft minutes from May (Item 1 on the present agenda) staff announced they have begun limiting Sound Lab sessions to two hours, yet the Trustee’s published policy allows four (see Rule 3 at above link).

Item 7. Financial Report Comparison of Beginning Budget to End of the Year Amended Budget

From the report it appears the \$9,908 adjustment to the Professional Services line item due to a more favorable janitorial services contract represents money removed from the budget and therefore lost to the library rather than made available to augment other line items. Is that correct?

Item 8. Adult and Reference Services Update

Considering it is supposed to be the informational hub of the City, I continue to think the Board should re-examine the library’s role in relation to City Hall. Even in this digital age, I think there is value in have printed copies of key governmental documents available for review in libraries.

I was recently looking for a copy of the City's [Harbor Area Management Plan](#) and was surprised to see the pages linking to the electronic copy had disappeared from the City website. Checking the library catalog, it was clear the library doesn't now have a copy, and may never have had. Similarly, there seem to be no printed copies, anywhere, of the City's [Local Coastal Plan](#) for the public to review. And with the Council about to spend a large amount of money to ask for the public's feedback on our current [General Plan](#), there are no printed copies of that document to review. Yet readily accessible copies of key local governmental documents seems like something the public would expect of a City-run public library.

Item 9. Corona del Mar Branch Project Update

I suspect some will wonder why the new branch has no evening hours. That decision, as I understand it, was based on the pattern of use at the old facility. But I would think a new facility might generate new demands, and the Board should retain the flexibility to adapt to them.

Item 10. Lecture Hall Update

See note under Item 1, above: \$570,000 has been budgeted for this effort in the City's Capital Improvement Program budget, including \$500,000 of "new" money. Being in the budget does not, however, commit the Council to spending it.

Item VII. Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items

Last month's "Wheelhouse List" omitted [May 24's opening](#) the Orange County Public Library System's rebuilt [Donald Dungan Branch](#) at Lions Park in Costa Mesa.

Just as the Mariners Branch serves many Costa Mesa residents, the new OCPL branch will be the closest library for many Newport Beach residents in the western part of the town.

This new 23,615-square-foot facility, built at a cost of \$36.5 million, is exceptionally [attractive](#) architecturally, especially from the inside, where the design is unusually light, airy and inviting.

Among features NBPL might learn from is a library-card-activated laptop self-checkout and return kiosk.

Like all OCPL branches, the Dungan Branch also supplements its physical collections with [Inter-Library Loan](#) at no cost to patrons (save possible charges imposed by the originating library) and Wi-Fi access for use on personal devices with no time (or "license"?) restrictions.

Their new library cards also include a key-chain copy (which I understand will be coming to NBPL with the Central Library's 25th anniversary).

A not-so-good feature shared with other OCPL branches is their rather arbitrary seeming restrictions on access to the internet via library-owned terminals (both desktop and laptop). Patrons are allowed a maximum of two log-ins per day with a maximum of 60 minutes use each time – causing devices to remain idle with no one waiting.