

November 18, 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 October 21, 2019 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

1. **Page 3** (handwritten blue 6), first line: “*Librarian Kachaturian reported the current Mariners Branch opened in 2006 and contains 15,305 square feet.*” [I don’t recall Andy’s exact words, but he was apparently referring to the branch at its present location. According to [NBPL’s own history](#), the original Mariners Branch, located in the same park, was dedicated in 1963.]
2. **Page 3** (handwritten blue 6), line 14: “*Story time Storytime attendance totaled more than 10,500.*”
3. **Page 3** (handwritten blue 6), paragraph 2, sentence 3: “*Books and Babies story time storytime is one of her favorite programs.*”
4. **Page 4** (handwritten blue 7), last sentence before Item 8: “*Chair Ray noted the 2019 World Book series, which has been moved into the circulation collection, and students utilize them.*”
5. **Page 4** (handwritten blue 7), last paragraph before Item 9: “*Branch & Youth Services Coordinator Walker added that signage noting the open hours of the branch and limiting off hours residential parking during those times will be installed. Parking spaces for staff and the Library van will be marked.*”
6. **Page 5** (handwritten blue 8), Item 10: The minutes indicate this item regarding the placement of donor recognition signage above the Central Library gallery was supposed to come back on the current agenda. It did not. Instead, there seems to be an item about the donor policy in general.
7. **Page 5** (handwritten blue 8), third sentence from end of first paragraph of Item 11: “*Chair Ray noted Vice Chair Watkins has responded to community concerns and opposition to the project in a letter, a copy of which has been provided at this meeting. Private funding will be raised for the project.*”
8. **Page 6** (handwritten blue 9), last sentence of paragraph 2 of Item 12: “*An ATM could be installed inside the business center, but it would not be a full-service ATM and use of it would be subject to the Library’s hours of operations.*” [It seems odd to me library staff is concerned about providing 24-hour banking, but not 24-hour WiFi.]
9. **Page 6** (handwritten blue 9), last paragraph: “*In reply to Board Member Glabman’s inquiries, Ms. Linton will provide the percentage of speakers’ fees funded through ticket sales.*” [That would be good to know!]
10. **Page 7** (handwritten blue 10), first paragraph of Item VII: “*Jim Mosher related that he was not able to locate a copy of the Bookmark at the Mariners Branch when it was first published.*”

Item 2. Patron Comments

With just four comments received in October, the number of comments seems to be dropping off. And apparently none at all were received through the website/online catalog. Could NBPL be doing more to encourage patrons to share their thoughts about the quality of their experience and ideas for improvement?

Comment 3: It seems illogical (to me) to assure the patron that NBPL's online interface is "mobile friendly" when the patron's comment was that whatever they are using is not "user-friendly" to them. I have no problem with it myself, but my guess is they don't find it either kind of friendly.

Item 3. Library Activities

Regarding "Ballot Drop Box" (handwritten page 13), while the Central Library seems highly likely, I thought the Orange County Registrar of Voters told the Council the [list of drop box locations](#) would not be final until December, and public input is still welcome. And I thought they were considering one at Mariners, as well (see [potential sites](#) map)?

Item 4. Expenditure Status Report

The Newport Beach Municipal Code contains a little-known [Section 3.08.020](#) ("Library Fund") stating: *"Pursuant to the assent of the majority of qualified electors of the City, voting at an election held on the twelfth day of April, 1938, a tax of five cents (\$.05) shall be levied in each fiscal year upon each one hundred dollars (\$100.00) of the assessed valuation of all taxable property within the City, for library purposes. Such tax shall be in addition to all other taxes which the City is authorized to levy. Such tax shall be collected in the same manner and at the same time as other municipal taxes are collected, and the proceeds therefrom shall be paid into the treasury of the City to the credit of the "library fund" and the money therefrom shall be expended for public library purposes in providing for and maintaining the public library for the City."*

This voter-imposed tax was within the limits of the subsequent City Charter, which originally contained a [Section 1107](#) (since repealed) allowing a special levy of not more than 10 cents per \$100 for libraries (and another 10 cents for general City advertising and promotion, and 15 cents for parks, beaches and recreation expenses).

The Section 3.08.020 tax is obviously not being collected, and it is unclear if it should have survived the Proposition 13 cap on total normal property taxes.

It would be interesting to compare the expectations of the 1938 voters to the current allocation of roughly **\$9 million** for basic library purposes (not including extraordinary expenses, such as branch or lecture hall building and rebuilding). The current assessed value of property in Newport Beach is more than \$50 billion, so a 5-cent tax would generate in excess of **\$25 million** per year. But the comparison is not so simple because in the aftermath of Proposition 13 most property is not assessed at its fair market value. If it were, the 5-cent tax would generate much more than \$25 million. However, it would take some research to discover how property was assessed in California in 1938 (assessors, if elected, wanting to be reelected may have assessed at less than the fair value, reducing the revenue voters expected from a 5-cent tax).

Item 5. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List.

It is good the Board is keeping track of the topics it wants to follow, but the list seems to have become a bit unbalanced, with many topics assigned to some months and none to others (especially because of the two-year cycle for policy review).

Item 6. Library Gift and Donor Policy - NBPL 3

This out-of-sequence review of NBPL 3 seems to be a follow-up to Item 10 from the October 21 meeting (see my comments on Item 1, page 5, on the first page, above), in which the Board considered a request for donor recognition on the wall used for the rotating art display on the ground floor of the Central Library. But since that is not mentioned in the staff report, I am unsure how adoption of the proposed revisions is supposed to affect that decision.

As to the revisions, I find the new term “Donor Recognition Walls” quite confusing. I thought a Donor Recognition Wall was what one called the thing at the Central Library referred to as the “donor recognition system” in the current policy, as well as similar installations recognizing donors at some of the branches (such as the recognition wall currently being replaced – for reasons I don’t entirely understand – in the entryway to Mariners).

Without a map or diagram, I am further unable to tell exactly which walls (or locations on walls?) in the Central Library are being designated as eligible to become “Donor Recognition Walls” (for a single donor) and which walls are already “Donor Recognition Walls.” Nor do I understand why this program is being confined to walls in the Central Library. Is the Foundation so focused on its own activities at the Central Library that it is unaware of the branches? And will donor recognition at the new Lecture Hall be the province of the Foundation and Library Lecture Hall Design Committee rather than the BLT?

Beyond these concerns, it seems extremely cumbersome, in a library policy, rather than stating what the current policy, to instead refer to actions by the BLT at some former time. And to expect readers to (without assistance) locate the proceedings of the [February 4, 2013, regular meeting](#) of the Board of Library Trustees to discover what is being talked about.

As to that former action, the [agenda](#) from 2013 stated that the BLT might vote on a “*recommended schematic proposed by SteveChaitow, AIA*” (one of the Civic Center/Central Library expansion team). But the schematic, and any staff report that might have accompanied it, does not seem to have been preserved. I can find my own comments on this from [December 2, 2012](#), and [February 4, 2013](#), but not it.

I would suggest that before taking any further action, the BLT attempt to reconstruct what was presented to it in 2013, including its basis and context, and the reasons for any actions taken. If that is not possible, I would recommend it start fresh.