

December 16, 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 November 18, 2019 Board of Library Trustees

Special Meeting Minutes – Closed Session

1. **Page 1** (handwritten blue 4), Public Comments, paragraph 2: “*Mr. Mosher summarized how the Costa Mesa Sanitary District Board reviews their General Manager’s performance **and in assistance in setting through publicly set** goals¹. All of which are presented **afterward** in a public meeting where they receive public input.”*”
2. **Page 1**, “V. CLOSED SESSION REPORT”: The Brown Act obligates the Chair to report what, if anything, happened in the closed session. As a result, **something should be inserted under this heading**. For example, did the Board terminate the Director’s employment (a possible outcome according to the agenda notice)? A typical report would be “**Chair Ray announced the Board took no reportable action.**” Without that, future readers will be left in the dark as to what this was about and what the outcome was.

Comment: I was very surprised to learn, assuming the minutes are correct, that Director Hetherton did not participate in his own evaluation. While I understand the Board might not want the Director present for part of the session, my understanding is the employee evaluation is supposed to be an opportunity for the employer (the Board) to discuss candidly with the employee (the Director) what it perceives as the pluses and minuses of his management style (that is, the effectiveness of his execution of his job duties) and share suggestions for improvement. Without the employee being present, it is difficult to understand how the employee can explain his actions to the Board, or how the Board can communicate its wishes to him.

Regular Meeting Minutes

1. **Page 2** (handwritten blue 6), Item 6, paragraph 3: The reference to the “*Mariners’ new donor wall*” will be confusing to readers since it is completely different from the Central Library “donor walls” discussed elsewhere in the section. One is an extensive list of the facility’s many pre-construction donors placed near the entrance to the facility. The other consists of an ordinary wall within the facility with a later, single donor’s name affixed to it. The Board, and staff, need a terminology to distinguish the two kinds of donor walls.
2. **Page 4** (handwritten blue 8), paragraph 2, sentence 2: “*ProLiteracy’s holiday party is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on December 7, and **Board of the** Library Trustees are invited.*” [The “Board” is a legal entity which would have trouble enjoying a party. The *people* on the Board are “Trustees.” They could.]

¹ An initial proposal for the year’s goals is privately developed by the board president in consultation with the general manager. The list is debated and completed by the full board at a public meeting.

Item 2. Patron Comments

The number of comments received remains remarkably low. Should more be done to encourage patron feedback?

Comment 4: The report does not indicate which branch the comment card was received at.

Item 3. Library Activities

Pages 11-12: I agree with staff's response to boycott of the Macmillan eBook embargo in view of the limited service and frustratingly long hold lists purchasing a single title of a popular book is likely to generate. It would, however, have been good to reproduce the original [memo](#) from Macmillan to authors and Macmillan's response to the ALA mentioned at the top of page 12 (which I have been unable to find).

The discussion raises a couple of questions:

1. Is our hold system sophisticated enough that it works by title rather than attaching the holds to a particular copy of a work? That is, when additional copies of an unexpectedly popular work are purchased, are they automatically used to relieve the existing hold list? Or do they become available separately from that list?
2. Do any of the publishers, including Macmillan, place limitations on the number of *paper* copies of a new work that libraries can purchase? If not, has anyone questioned the logic by which retail sales of eBooks would differently impacted than traditional paper books.
3. Shouldn't the Board be asked if it wants NBPL to join the total boycott?

Pages 14: I do not personally know what the "*In-n-Out Cover to Cover reading promotion*" is. Does it involve hamburgers and children?

Pages 15: I have noticed the new installation at the Mariners Branch, reproduced in the photograph on this page -- which recognizes the original donors to the construction of that facility -- has attracted more curiosity than the old. In part, I suspect, because despite libraries being information centers, it does not in any way explain what it is there for. And in part because one now has to approach closely to read the names.

Aesthetically, this is a huge step down from the beautiful wood paneling that had the donors' names engraved in much larger type. I hope it, too, was photographed before it was unexpectedly removed or plastered over for reasons that remain a mystery to me.

Is the idea of the tiny typeface will make it possible for new people to be able to pay to have their names added to the wall? If so, how will they be distinguished from the names of the people² who actually made construction of the building possible?

² Unlike with the Central Library, I did not personally contribute to the construction of the new Mariners Branch because the fundraising campaign stated the facility was going to be renamed the "Donna and John Crean Mariners Branch" in recognition of their "seed" contribution. Not only did that conflict with established [Council Policy B-9](#) (City facilities are not to be named after living people), but I could not see why others wishing to contribute to civic betterment should be required, in doing so, to pay to glorify the Creans. It struck me as a bit of scam. Had the Creans offered to pay the entire cost, I would feel differently

Pages 16: It is unclear from the report if “Collection HQ” is being used to actively change the collection or merely to monitor it. I would caution that the fact that a book does not circulate does not necessarily mean there is no interest in it or that it is not looked at in the facility.

Item 4. Expenditure Status Report

It would be helpful to indicate either the “YTD Expended” or “Available Budget” as a **percent** of the “Revised Budget” amount (“Available” being 100% minus “YTD”).

That would highlight in a much more readily grasped way the areas in which expenditures are running ahead of or behind expectations.

Item 5. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List

I believe that in response to Trustee comments at the last meeting, the list has been modified slightly. It would have been good to highlight what those changes were to see if the Board as a whole agrees. I notice there continues to be an absence of regularly scheduled items for review in December, as well as in November of odd-numbered years.

Item 6. Newport Beach Public Library and Homeless Patrons

Since there is no date on it, it is hard to tell how often the Community Resources guide (provided as Attachment B) is reviewed for completeness and accuracy. It is also unfortunate it could not have been reviewed for usefulness by the Council’s Homeless Task Force before it lost its citizen members.

I think it would be helpful to attach to this NBPL-generated handout a copy of the County’s [Pocket Guide](#) Resource Directory for the central region (available on their [website](#), but presumably available in printed copies, as well). It has a format and contains information some homeless may find easier to use, although it, too, lacks a date so I don’t know how current or accurate it is.

Our own handout is oddly missing the [Someone Cares](#) Soup Kitchen in Costa Mesa, and both seem to be missing [Second Chance OC](#) which (as I understand it) offers job placement to the homeless (and is an organization the City contributes to through its community grants program).

And, since the plight of the homeless is so visible in the libraries, it might also be helpful to have available to patrons information on what the non-homeless can do to help those less fortunate. The County’s [Ways to Assist](#) handout for our service area would be a start.

about their name appearing in the name, but they did not. I am pleased to see that at the top of the panel their names appear to be listed in a “Benefactor” category, rather than as part of the branch name. But I think some confusion about this remains, and I continue to not know if NBPL regards their names as part of the name, or not. I hope not, but if so, NBPL staff should understand such naming was (to the best of my knowledge) never approved by the City Council – as it would have to be. Indeed, in keeping with its policy the Council notably refused overtures to rename the rebuilt OASIS Center the “Evelyn Hart OASIS Center,” despite that person being much more deserving of recognition in view of her longstanding promotion of senior causes in the Newport Beach.

Item 7. Library Gift and Donor Policy - NBPL 3

Specific comments

The second sentence of the first paragraph under “Foundation Gifts” on page 45 (page 1 of the revised policy) should be modified to read: “*All donors who contribute \$2,500 or more to the Foundation shall be permanently recognized on the marble donor wall outside the Central Library’s front doors along the breezeway leading to the Bamboo Courtyard adjacent to Avocado Ave.*”

The second sentence of the fourth paragraph in that same section should be corrected to read: “*Gifts Donors of \$5,000 or greater shall have five (5) years to complete the pledge, ...*”

General Comments

The policy about “Donor Recognition Walls” starting at the bottom of page 45 remains strange and strangely stated – especially since this seems to be a continuation of “Foundation Gifts” rather than a new topic, and the previous section refers to the thing outside the Central Library as a donor recognition wall.

1. The reference to “the February 4, 2013 regular meeting” of the Board of Library Trustees – at which action was apparently taken without modifying the policy – is unusual and, at least to me, unnecessary. Why not simply state what the current Board’s policy is?
2. The action in 2013 seems to have been a one-off decision to deviate from the Board’s normal donor recognition policy in order to encourage private contributions to help defray the cost of the Central Library expansion, which was, at that time, about to open.
3. In that connection, it is not at all obvious the opening verbiage is still relevant in saying the purpose of the naming is to honor those “*that contributed funds to a capital campaign or other major fundraising effort.*” If the program makes sense, wouldn’t we be equally – or even more – obligated to honor those who made a spontaneous gift to the library, unprompted by any specific fundraising campaign, should they wish to be so recognized?
4. On page 46, in the second paragraph before “Friends Gifts,” the statements that “*Recognition shall be **permanent unless** a corresponding pledge is **not** fulfilled over five years*” and “*If a pledge payment is **not** paid within 30 days following written notice to the most recent address provided to the Library, the Board of Library Trustees shall have the right to **remove** the name recognition permanently*” is inconsistent with the statement on the previous page that “*recognition shall be implemented **after** the pledge has been fulfilled.*” That seems a much better policy than installing something that might need to be removed.
5. The idea in 2013 seems to have been to offer an opportunity to name discrete spaces in the expansion area, much as public museums allow galleries to be named after major

donors.³ That concept appears to continue in the statement, oddly buried between the two sentences cited in “3” above, that “*Additional names shall not be added to a named wall.*”

6. However, it is unclear if the intent of the current policy is to name an entire area with a single name on a single wall or to allow *all* the walls within a given area to be separately named. Or was the sentence just mentioned left in inadvertently and the concept is now to establish new “donor recognition walls” within the library similar to that in the breezeway outside, to which names of multiple major new donors can be added as new major donations are received, with the donor being allowed to choose (by their contribution size) which wall they want their name added to.
 - i. If the intent is to name entire spaces (similar to galleries in a museum), then haven’t some of the spaces contemplated in 2013 already been named, and need to be removed from the list of opportunities?
 - ii. Alternatively, if the intent is to extend the program to *all* the walls in the designated areas shown in Attachments D and E, it is unclear why the opportunity continues to be confined to the 2013 expansion area, or to walls in the Central Library. Why shouldn’t a donor be allowed to put their name on a wall in a branch?
7. Placing “Donor Recognition Walls” as a section of the policy separate from “Foundation Gifts” and “Friends Gifts” makes it appear that although, as it says, the NBPL Foundation has been allowed to set the recognition levels, the donation would be made directly to the Library. If that is correct, it is unclear why the Board doesn’t set the donation level for recognition on its walls.

Beyond the above, the Trustees may wish to review the City Council’s discussion earlier this year of its policy allowing the naming of donated items in public parks and rights-of-way (see May 14, 2019, [Item 15](#)). Many Council members felt allowing private persons to affix their names to public spaces was inconsistent with the concept of what a public space is supposed to be (namely, a space belonging equally to the entire public). That policy was amended (as [Item 22](#) on September 10) to terminate the public naming of such objects in recognition of nothing more than the receipt of a cash payment.

³ The Civic Center architect, in explaining the Foundation’s fundraising concept to the Board, showed prototype examples of named areas such as the “Charles Dickens Study Area,” the “Jane Austen Reading Room” and the “Lewis Carroll Childrens Room.” The Trustees at the time unanimously agreed it would be a wonderful idea for the Foundation to find donors selflessly interested in honoring the world’s great authors of the past. They were disappointed to be told those were merely mock-ups, and the famous authors’ names would be replaced by those of the donors.