

February 16, 2016, BLT Agenda Item Comments

Comments on the Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees (BLT) agenda items submitted by:
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Item V.A. Minutes of the January 19, 2016 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

Page 1: Under “Staff Present”: “... NBPL ~~Founding Foundation~~ Board Member Toby Larson; ...”

Page 1: “Public Comments,” paragraph 2: “Jim Mosher commented on the Library Activities Report and referenced the City’s ~~Facility-Finance Facilities Financial~~ Planning Tool ...”

Page 3: paragraph 1: “A book drop will remain on the site during the closure and the Children’s programs will be moved to the Community Youth Center at Grant Howald Park which is currently being coordinated with the ~~Parks and Recreation-Division Recreation & Senior Services Department.~~” [? The City of Newport Beach definitely has a “Recreation & Senior Services Department.” I don’t believe there is a “Parks and Recreation Division” within that department, but there could be.]

Page 3: Item 6, paragraph 1: “Administrative Support Specialist Elaine McMillion presented the list of 2016 ~~City Hall~~ Holidays and the Board’s 2016 meeting schedule.” [note: City Hall or City Office’s holiday schedule is different from the Library’s]

Page 4: last paragraph before “B. Monthly Reports”: “Library Services Director Hetheron announced that the Joan Irving Brandt ~~Bicentennial Centennial~~ Celebration will be on Saturday, March 5, 2016, at 2:00 p.m.”

Page 5: “VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS,” paragraph 1: “NBPL Foundation Board Member Toby Larson commended Library Services Director Hetheron for conducting Library tours and stated it is a wonderful way for good ~~Public-Relations public relations~~ and encouraging membership.”

Item 1. Customer Comments

Comment 5 (restrooms out of towels/towels on floor): I noticed that in the men’s restroom at the Civic Center Community Room, one of the two paper towel dispensers was recently replaced with an air-powered hand dryer. That would seem a possible solution to this perennial problem reported at the libraries.

Item 2. Library Activities

Page 1: Regarding the Language People’s “Video Remote Interpreting” kiosks for deaf patrons communicating by sign language, the details in the Activities Report are sketchy, but unless it’s of very slight cost buying stand-alone equipment for every location where staff interacts with the public seems like a potentially expensive solution for what sounds like a limited problem. Since

it seems likely not all hearing-impaired patrons even know sign language, isn't communicating in writing more efficient and more universally accessible?

Item 3. Expenditure Status Report

As was done in the past, it would seem helpful to show the expenditures to date as a percent of the budgeted amount. If the report is indeed "As of 2/1/16" (as it says it is), then it would seem to represent seven months of the fiscal year started June 1, 2015, and one would expect expenditures for such steady items as salaries and benefits to be at $7/12 = 58\%$ of the budgeted totals. Instead they seem to be at around 47% of the planned year-end amount – a level expected in mid-December.

Only the utilities bill seems to be running close to the seven month expectation. It seems reasonable to wonder why this is, especially for salaries?

Item 5. Annual Budget Update

The present report contains more detailed budget numbers than I recall being presented to the Board in past years, although without more explanation it is difficult to comment on its content.

As best I can tell, for example, Attachments B1-B5 and C1 repeat a subset of the columns and numbers provided in Attachments B5-B10 and C2, so they seem to have been included for the sole purpose of displaying the annotations accompanying some lines?

As a general comment, the [annual budget](#) in Newport Beach consists of three documents, the *Performance Plan* (which provides the verbal narrative of the what the departmental line items are for), the *Budget Detail* (which gives the line item amounts), and the *Capital Improvement Projects* volume (which expands on a summary list in the Budget Detail).

Although the Board has apparently not asked to review the library-related portions of the *Performance Plan* or *CIP*, I have noticed that for all departments (not just Library Services), the way departmental functions are described in the *Performance Plan* have become increasingly disconnected from the way they are reported in the *Detail*, making it increasingly difficult for the public (and probably the Council) to follow what is being reported where.

For example, in the 2016 *Budget Detail*, each Library Services salary, service and materials expense was assigned to one of the following 11 "divisions":

- 010-4002 CULTURAL & ARTS
- 010-4010 SUPPORT SERVICES
- 010-4015 TECHNICAL PROCES
- 010-4020 BALBOA BRANCH
- 010-4030 CDM BRANCH
- 010-4040 MARINERS BRANCH
- 010-4050 CENTRAL LIBRARY
- 010-4060 LITERACY
- 010-4090 LIBRARY FOUNDATIO
- 010-4091 FRIENDS OF THE LIB
- 010-4093 DESIGNATED GIFTS

but in the *Performance Plan* the narrative is divided into just 5 “programs” with (for the most part) different names:

- Public Services
- Library Administration
- Technical Processing
- Literacy Services
- Arts and Cultural Services

Although the correlation between these names is simpler for Library Services than for many of the City’s other departments, it would still seem helpful if consistent names could be used for the “programs” described in the *Plan* and the “divisions” under which they are reported in the *Detail*, or at least provide in the *Plan* a cross-reference to where a program’s expenses (and revenue) can be found in the *Detail* and vice versa.

If this were done, it might become evident that the *Performance Plan* provides no explanation of what the last three Library Services “divisions” reported in the *Budget Detail* (the expenses funded by gifts from the Foundation, Friends and individual donors) represent. In fact, from the explanation of the “core functions” of the Library Administration program it might appear that the City, at its expense, supports the Friends and Foundation, rather than (primarily) the other way around.

Some specific comments:

Attachment A:

1. I am unable to relate the revenue line item numbers to those listed in the 2016 *Budget Detail*. For example, “Passport Execution Fee” was “5125” and “Passport Photos” was “5126”. Are new numbers being introduced in the new budget?
2. More importantly, the Board may wish to inquire as to the extent specific library-generated revenues are dedicated towards defraying specific library-related expenses, and to what extent they simply go into the General Fund to cover general City expenses?
3. Similarly, the Board may want its memory refreshed on the extent to which unspent library-related line items carry over into the following fiscal year, rather than being returned to the general fund, and whether those understandings are in writing or simply understood by past practice.
4. For example, what is the status of the \$210,500 of private contributions from FY 2015, and what has it been used for?
5. Finally, the system of having no estimate of how much revenue is expected from contributions may be politically wise, but seems poor budgeting. Surely there is enough history to make a reasonable guess?

Attachment B1 (B6):

1. A small point, but regarding the \$19,300 water bill, in view of the recently announced need to increase City sewer rates, it seems likely that in the future the City will begin

charging departments for their share of sewer usage. The water charge is currently \$3.08 per hundred cubic feet and the sewer charge \$0.35 per hcf (likely to increase soon to around \$0.40). A charge of $(0.40/3.05)*\$19,300 = \$2,531$ seems likely (this would be in addition to what I believe is the larger fee paid to the Orange County Sanitary District for treatment of the wastewater, which I believe is included in "SWR/PRPFEE" on Attachment B3/B8).

Attachments B4-5 (B9-10):

1. Under "Proposed for 2016/17" why are most of the entries blank?

Attachments B1-10:

1. Why is the proposed budget for "LIT" uniformly set to "0"? Is this realistic

Attachment C1 (C2):

1. What is the Board's role with regard to the Arts budget?
2. What is the status of funding from new sources such as the promised annual Tourism Business Improvement District contribution, the dissolution of the Balboa Theater Foundation and developer fee contributions? Are any of those to be split between "arts" and "cultural" uses?

Finally, what is the status of and what new proposals will be made for library related projects in the *CIP* portion of the budget? For example, are there still plans to explore construction of an auditorium?

Item 6. Circulation Policy Update to Accommodate "Tech Toys" Collection

This item again refers to a goal identified during the Fall 2015 Administrative Team retreat. To put this recommendation in context, it would be good for the Board to receive a more comprehensive report on the results of that retreat.

Regarding the proposed policy revision:

1. "9.03 Replacement Cost of Materials - Actual Replacement Cost of Item" seems to be missing an introductory sentence clearly stating that the normal practice is to charge the actual replacement cost of each unreturned item. The subsequent details listed are refinements to that general policy.
2. If the Board accepts the recommended changes, the revision date at the end of the policy will obviously need to be updated to reflect that action.

Item 7. Arts and Cultural Update

1. In paragraph 4 of the staff report, I believe “*Judit Laugher*” may be “*Judit Laufer*”? Otherwise, her name is misspelled on the [City website](#).
2. Regarding the Newport Beach Art Exhibition and the statement that “*A portion of the proceeds from the art sale funds Newport Beach community arts programs,*” given Attachment A of Item 5 on the current agenda, it might be helpful to highlight where this amount shows up in the annual revenue budget and how it escapes going into the City’s general fund. Is it part of line item “521495-ARTS COMMISSION REV”? And are there any other things that contribute to that line item? For example, is any revenue generated by the Newport Beach Arts Foundation? And is it part of the same line item?

Item 8. Corona del Mar Branch Library Project Update

It is good to see the thorough staff update to the Board.

Since the CdM Branch has historically had somewhat limited operating hours (for example, currently closed Sundays & Mondays), one question that occurs to me is if the design is such that the “reading porch” will be accessible to the public when the branch is otherwise closed? Although this may be a policy decision for the future, if it is, I would strongly recommend leaving the WiFi on after hours to make it a more attractive and usable space.

Item 9. Balboa Branch Library Project

As the minutes of the Board’s last meeting indicate, I pointed out that the City Manager’s (or Public Works Department’s?) proposed downsizing of the future Balboa Branch was apparent in a copy of the City’s “*Facilities Financial Planning Tool*” document presented to the Finance Committee as [Item V.C](#) at their January 14, 2016, meeting.

I see now that the smaller future size for the Balboa Branch (5,566 square feet reduced to 2,500 sf, with the fire station growing correspondingly in size) had been included in the version of the same document presented to the whole Council (and public) as [Item SS2](#) at a May 26, 2015, budget study session, but apparently went unnoticed.

Staff’s recommendation of conducting a needs assessment seems like a good one. One might also ask if there are other areas of the City that are now, or will in the future be in need of more convenient library services?

Regarding the proximity map, rather than simply showing circles unperturbed by water and other obstacles, it might be useful, but may not be practical, to illustrate the areas within a certain driving distance of the library system’s various facilities.