

April 18, 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 March 21, 2016 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

Page 1: “I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER – Chair King called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. at the Balboa Branch, 100 E. Balboa Boulevard.”

Page 6, Item 13: “Vice Chair Prichard reported the committee continues to do good work and that Sherman Alexi Alexie was the speaker in March. He added that David Ignatious Ignatius will be the speaker in April and has sold out.”

Page 6, Item VIII: “Jim Mosher commented on the Library Foundation’s fundraising, election of officers to occur in July, according to the By-laws, the importance of tomorrow’s City Council meeting as well as the April 12th meeting, and review of the infrastructure Arts and Cultural element of the General Plan.”

Item 2. Library Activities

Page 1 mentions a “soon-to-be-revealed new web page” for the library. Wouldn’t it be wise for such items to be reviewed by the Board so they have at least some formal public input before they’re launched?

Likewise pages 1 & 2 mention CENIC. I don’t recall the Board being briefed on this. Will the “faster Internet connectivity” be at all branches? Or just Central (or possibly Mariners, since it is adjacent to a school)? What new “research and educational networks” will it provide access to (this is not obvious from the [CENIC website](#))? Is the City paying to participate? If so, how much? Will the greater bandwidth reduce the need to sign in (and out) of WiFi and internet connections?

Item 3. Expenditure Status Report

For operations with constant demands throughout the year, If the *Expenditure Report* truly reflects amounts paid through April 1st (as it says), one would expect one quarter of the originally budgeted amount to remain available. That looks fairly close this time.

Item 5. Corona del Mar Branch Project Update

If there have been changes to the plans or schedule, it would have been helpful to have something for review in advance of the meeting.

Item 6. Marketing Update & Social Networking Update

In the absence of a report in advance of the meeting, it is difficult to comment.

Item 7. Newport Beach Historical Society at Balboa Branch Update

In addition to the [Sherman Library](#), there appear to be at least two historical societies in Newport Beach: The [Balboa Island Museum and Historical Society](#) (which the City has supported in its budget) and the [current one](#) (which I do not believe it has).

Meanwhile, NBPL lacks a space to properly display and allow access to its *own* local history collection. Since Balboa is the oldest branch in the system, if the Board thinks the Society would be a useful addition, then when the Balboa Branch is rebuilt it might make some sense to reserve an area large enough to combine the library's collections (currently in an alcove at Central) with those of the Society in a single, more usable area devoted to local history – something along the lines of what the City of Orange Library (where our Library Services Manager, Dave Curtis, is going) has on its second floor.

As to this agenda item, it is difficult to tell if it was intended as an informational item or an action item. Although the agenda announcement characterizes it as merely a report, and the write-up contains no recommendation, the “*Discussion*” mentions the need for a Board-approved Memorandum of Understanding. Will the Board be asked to make a decision at this meeting? If not, when?

Does the Society see the library as its primary work, meeting and storage area? Or is the requested space intended for display purposes only, augmenting a main activity area elsewhere? If it is the former, has the Society offered to pay for its use of the space? If not, to justify its use of space that could be used for other purposes, does the society propose to offer anything of benefit to library users other than the items mentioned in the staff report (a local history space with display cases and a flat screen monitor)?

Item 8. Customer Survey

I think it would be helpful to be a bit more explicit about who library staff wishes to reach with the survey and what it intends to do as a result of the responses it receives.

Depending on the answers to the above, the draft survey may be a bit on the longish side (or not).

Specific comments on the draft survey:

Opening line: Should it say “All **questions answers** are optional.”?

Question 2:

I would suggest “Which location~~s~~ do you use **most frequently**?” and having three categories of response: “Often” “Sometimes” “Never”

Question 4:

I would put Question 5 *before* Question 4. It seems to me respondents should be encouraged to reflect on what they are looking for in a library before being asked to rate specific services.

Likewise I would move the Section 4 questions up before or after Question 5 (and before Question 4). That way, all the “what is important to you?” questions would be in one place.

“Collection (books, DVDs, music, newspapers, etc.)”: I suspect at least some respondents may be frustrated with this question, since they think the book collection is “Excellent” but the newspaper collection “poor”. I would suggest breaking out the individual items for which a response is wanted.

The same comment applies to “Programs (classes, story times, etc.)” and “Online services (website, catalog, research databases, etc.)” and possibly even to “Library policies,” “Facilities” and “Hours of operation,” since, for example, a respondent may think one facility and hours (or policy) good, and another bad.

To allow suggested specificity of response without the survey becoming typographically too long, one possibility would be to list the items for which a response is needed in a more compact table with a single check box next to each, accompanied by a request for the respondent to check all the items he or she feels need improvement. It could then be assumed that with respect to the items not checked, the respondent is either satisfied or has no interest in them (with the response to Question 5 likely indicating which of those two possibilities is the case).

Question 5:

As with Question 4, respondents are going to be frustrated by the lumping together of things they may have different feelings about. They may love DVDs, but have no interest in books.

As a column heading, instead of “*Not Important*,” I would suggest “*Could live without*.”

Again, I think Question 5 and Section 4 should come *before* Question 4, not after it.

Alternatively, since the topics of interest in Questions 4 and 5 largely overlap, I think the two could be profitably combined in a single list, with each accompanied by two checkboxes.

One checkbox could be used to indicate items that are important to the respondent. And the other to indicate items the respondent feels need improvement.

Question 8: I liked another survey in which this question was phrased: “*If you could improve just one thing, what would it be?*”

Question 9 (“*How does the library benefit you or the community?*”): I would delete this question. It is a highly leading question and seems out of character with the others. I think it will make at least some respondents suspect the purpose of the survey is to fish for compliments to use in publicity materials rather than a genuine wish for public input.

Section 3: Questions like these, defining the demographic characteristics of the respondent, typically come at the beginning or end of a survey. Continuing the survey with another section after this may be surprising to some.

Section 4: Again, I would move these so that all the “What’s important to you?” questions are in one place. Beyond that, I’m not sure I understand why asking about the merit of these particular four library goals was selected, but I would re-order them in the sequence: 17, 18, 16, 15 – so they go from the most general to the most specific. Also, I would rephrase Question 17 to parallel Question 18, to something like: “*Empowering customers to shape the resources and services provided?*” Alternatively, it might be possible to rephrase all four so that they can be merged into the Question 5 checklist.

Google reveals that the Maine State Library has a small collection of library surveys online:

<http://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/admin/surveys/>

Of those, the one I like best is probably this:

<http://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/admin/surveys/patron1-survey.doc>

in large part because it fits on a single page.

Getting the NBPL survey to fit on a single page might be a worthy goal.