

April 19, 2021, 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 March 15, 2021 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

Suggested corrections: The passages shown in *italics* below are from the [draft minutes](#) with a suggested correction indicated in **strikeout underline** format.

Page 2 (page 6 of agenda packet), paragraph 2: “Chair Watkins **complemented complimented** the thoughtful and researched response by Adult Services Coordinator Rebecca Lightfoot on Handwritten Page 19.”

Page 2 (page 6 of agenda packet), Item 3, paragraph 1, sentence 2: *Specifically, she wanted to know about the Principal of Newport Coast **Elementary’s Elementary’s** request for the Library to do a video for an online assembly.*”

Page 4 (page 8 of agenda packet), Item 7, paragraph 1: “Board Member Ray explained the March 15, 2021 meeting has been postponed because the architect is completing a cost analysis of the project and needed additional time to complete **and an** accurate report.”

Page 4 (page 8 of agenda packet), Item 9, paragraph 1, sentence 2: “The merchandise will be ordered shortly, and **the** City Finance **Department** will help with access to the City’s reseller’s permit so that merchandise can be obtained at cost and sold at retail.”

Page 5 (page 9 of agenda packet), paragraph 1, sentence 2: “Library Services Director Hetherington encouraged the Board to have staff conduct a **need needs** assessment and outreach to the public.”

Page 5 (page 9 of agenda packet), paragraph 7, sentence 1: “Chair Watkins confirmed that Library Services Director Hetherington received an opinion from the Deputy City Attorney **office** that stated that it is inappropriate to disrupt or interfere with the Great Blue Heron population at the Balboa branch.” [Alternatively: “the **Deputy City Attorney Attorney’s** office”. Also, was this a reference to Assistant City Attorney Summerhill or Deputy City Attorney Lakhani? Somewhat confusingly, in the [City Attorney’s office](#), “Assistant” (of which there is one) is a higher rank than “Deputy” (of which there are three).]

Page 5 (page 9 of agenda packet), last sentence: “The Library Live event with Jenny Offill also went well and was commended by Parks, **Beaches** and Recreation Commissioner Laird **Hanes Hayes**.”

Page 6 (page 10 of agenda packet), last paragraph, sentence 2: “The **Lilly Lily** King happy hour was a success and raised significant funds.”

Page 7 (page 11 of agenda packet), Item VIII last paragraph, last sentence: “Chair Watkins stated that Natalie **Basmacivan Basmaciyan** is assigned to the Homeless Taskforce for the foreseeable future.”

Item 2. Patron Comments

Comment 2: For the Board's information, the 2020 tax booklets are also available for in-person pickup at the Mariners Branch (although in a different location from where they formerly were -- instead of by the scanner/photocopier, they are in the video racks).

Comment 4: On this, too, the Mariners Branch also had a battery recycling box, at least pre-COVID, and I believe it still does (like Central, next to the photocopier).

Comment 6: Last I checked, the OC Public Library bookstores in Irvine (both [Heritage Park](#) and [University Park](#)) welcomed (and sold) Asian-language books. Their [La Palma](#) branch also has an extensive Japanese collection, although I don't recall if they have a bookstore. The Friends might want to cooperate with these if they don't already.

Item 7. Request to City Council to Maintain Current Fee for B&W Photocopies

I appreciate staff's effort to keep patron printing costs at a level similar to those at other libraries.

I think it is important to point out my concern is not just with *photocopies* but with per page patron *printing* costs in general. Photocopies are relatively infrequent and made on a coin-operated multi-functional machine dedicated to that purpose. The great majority of patron printing, by contrast, is done from the public computer terminals and produced on separate printing-only devices (also requiring coin or credit card to unlock). I am not sure which machines the Finance Department's contractor studied to arrive at the **35¢** black and white/ 45¢ per color per page costs which the Council recently approved. Although their staff report (March 9, 2021, Item 13, [page 11](#)) refers to "copiers" and "copies," I believe their intent was for these new charges to apply to *both* copying *and* printing.

I think it is also important to realize that if a member of the public asked a City employee in any Department other than Library Services to print out a document for them, the Finance Department recommended and Council-approved "pass thru" cost would be **3¢** per page for black and white and 10¢ for color (see lines 6 and 7 of the [Schedule of Rents, Fines, and Fees](#)).

I assume (but don't know) the difference in cost estimates is related to different contracts for purchase and maintenance of the machines, the coin-operated lock, and a lower volume of use – the lower volume of use being a situation that will likely to be worsened by the increased charge, leading to still greater increases in the future. In view of this wide disparity between the **15¢** currently charged library patrons and **3¢** cost at which the City can normally deliver printing, I hope the BLT will direct library staff to consider if there is different service delivery model that would bring the patron printing cost down to a level closer to that charged by other departments.

As to the current BLT staff report, I'm not sure why, in its table, all the other libraries but one are shown as charging 15¢ per page for black and white printing. I believe the information I presented to the Board at its last meeting is current and correct for the [City of Commerce Public Library](#) (**10¢** B&W/ 35¢ color with the first \$1.00 free per day) and [Cerritos Public Library](#) (**10¢** B&W/ 45¢ color).

I am also concerned about the reference in the second paragraph below the table to the printing charge as being a "nuisance" fee. I think it is a poor message to send to Council that the BLT or NBPL staff sees any service to its patrons as potentially becoming a nuisance.

As Tim points out in the following paragraph, there are fundamental policy reasons for subsidizing library costs.

In that connection, on April 16, *The New York Times* published an [obituary](#)¹ of [Vartan Gregorian](#), a recently-deceased educator who served as [President](#) of the New York Public Library system in the 1980's and is credited with reviving it from a period of decay caused by limited funding. One of the quotes that Dr. Gregorian used in speaking to civic leaders seems relevant here:

"No, the library is not a cost center! It is an investment in the city's past and future!"

Another I found touching is this:

"He called the library "a sacred place," telling The New Yorker: "Think of a lone person in one of our reading rooms, who has just read a book, a single book that has perhaps not been read in 20 years by another living soul, and from that reading comes an invention of incalculable importance to the human race. It makes a man tremble.""

While that is an experience more likely to occur today in browsing an internet archive, it struck me as one *not* likely to happen at NBPL, for a book at NBPL that had not been checked out in the last 20 years is likely to have long since been discarded or donated to the Friends (see the staff report for Item 11 on pages 65 and 66 of the current agenda).

¹ Available to NBPL cardholders on [ProQuest](#).