

December 20, 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 Nov. 15, 2021 Board of Library Trustees Meeting

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

Page 5 (page 9 of agenda packet), paragraph 8, last two sentences: “He has ~~revied~~ **reviewed** *the public survey and believes it to be very well done. He called for a ~~Motion~~ **motion** to approve the survey unless there were comments, questions, or changes to the document.”*

Page 9 (page 13 of agenda packet), Item XIII, paragraph 2, last sentence: “He suggested the BLT consider ~~revive~~ **reviving** *the program.*”

Item 2. Patron Comments

The number of comments received seems extremely low to me. That makes me wonder if the opportunities for providing feedback are well enough publicized.

Also, I was the source of **Comment 4** about the lack of [WiFi](#) during a library closed hour, which I submitted (from another site) using the [Contact Us](#) form on the library website.

While I appreciate the response, I had not seen it prior to reading the present agenda packet.

This makes we wonder if other commenters are aware of the responses that have been prepared for them.

I would, incidentally, continue to advocate for 24-hour WiFi, which I rather thought had been instituted during the pandemic. I doubt turning the WiFi off from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. has much effect deterring homeless encampments, and it would be a less confusing (and lower-maintenance) system, less likely to go wrong.

Regarding **Comment 2**, I am not sure I understand why the NBPL would be unwilling to host an occasional board game night. That might be more appropriate activity for OASIS (and perhaps staff should have directed the requester there), but it would seem like it would attract patrons and make the library seem more welcoming to them.

Item 3. Library Activities

Regarding the internet usage statistics on agenda packet page 20, if the last three tables indeed refer only to “Cassie *Wireless* (Spot) Sessions,” which I take to mean NBPL laptops and patrons connecting with their own devices, is there separate tracking of the use of the *wired* (not wireless) public terminals available at all facilities?

I ask because I am surprised by the roughly 10 to 1 ratio of usage between Central and Mariners, which I suspect has mostly to do with the more extensive study areas at Central. I would expect much more similar usage for the wired terminals.

Item 5. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List

The list mistakenly lists “Review Holidays and Meeting Schedule” as a pending activity for the “Jan 18, 2022” meeting, when it is actually Item 11 on the present agenda.

Item 6. Review of the Library Lecture Hall Policy (NBPL 15)

The staff report does not mention the primary reason for this revision so close on the heels of the policy’s November 15 adoption.

I believe it was prompted by [Council member O’Neill’s comment](#) at the November 30, 2021, City Council meeting, where the LLH contract, Memorandum of Understanding with the NBPLF and this policy were presented for review and action. Council member O’Neill’s comment was that the City should be included as a first priority user. But he also commented that this was only a suggestion, as neither he nor the Council as a whole have the power to compel the BLT to make the change, since the Charter reserves the setting of library policy to the BLT.

Regarding the proposed revision, I would note:

1. The existing “A. First Priority” “2” seems now to be subsumed within the new “3” -- so **“2” could be deleted.**
2. Alternatively, “2” could combined with “3”, creating something like: “2. *Official business of the City of Newport Beach, including, but not limited to, City sponsored, co-sponsored, and/or conducted programs and any official Library sponsored, co-sponsored, and/or conducted programs and activities that are directly related to the Library Mission and the Library’s functions and purposes.*” But leaving the present “2” in seems to place greater restrictions on use of the LLH by the Library Department than by any other City department.
3. There seems to be an error in the redlining related to the new occupancy clause. From agenda packet page 35, it looks like the intent was to have separate clauses:
“F. Attendance for events or activities in the LLH shall not exceed Newport Beach Fire Department occupancy requirements.
G. Use of the LLH is limited from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday through Saturday, and 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays, unless expressly approved in writing in advance by the Library Services Director.”

and so on, through:

“J. Applications for reservations must be made no more than 90 days in advance and not more than once every 90 days.”

But “F” and “G” were inadvertently combined into a single clause, throwing off the subsequent lettering.

4. I continue to think it might be useful to provide in the policy examples of uses that could *not* be approved. For example, does the BLT wish to make the LLH available for for-profit commercial activities or events?

Item 8. Fine Elimination in Public Libraries

Particularly consider the COVID-related changes, I don't think the statistics presented provide any clear evidence regarding the impact of fine-free policies. However, I think the staff recommendation to go slow on adopting such a policy is wise.

Personally, I think the improved noticing and automated renewals has gone a long way toward avoiding the inadvertent accumulation of fines.

In addition to the problems noted by staff, most, if not all, of the fine-free systems (see [OCPL](#)) include enforcement mechanisms that might be seen as even more chilling than overdue fines. In particular, there is typically blockage of all borrowing privileges and billing for lost material if a single item is not returned within a relatively short time, such as within 30 days of the original due date. Since the absence of fines seems likely to create a lackadaisical attitude about returning things by a specific date, I can see where this could lead to an increase in missing items and large bills, creating an administrative headache for staff and blocking families from access while they search for misplaced books.

Item 10. Balboa Branch Replacement Update

The survey seems generally well thought out to me.

I am particularly curious to see how many people are aware the NBPL offers inter-library loan (a service available at [no cost at OCPL branches](#)).

My comments:

1. **Part 4** appears to be about the respondents feeling about libraries in general, not the Balboa Branch specifically. While NBPL may want to know his information, I think it would be better to ask "***Which of the following services would you like to see at the new Balboa Branch (indicating their importance to you)?***"
2. One page 3, so as not to deter people from returning the form, it might be useful to indicate completing the essay questions is optional.
3. In Question 6, I would **delete** "***if at all***". Including it, makes this very much a leading question ... and since there is always room for improvement, may strike some as a bit arrogant. Those who think no improvement is possible can always answer: "It's perfect as it is!" But that should not be the default answer. At least, it's not a very useful one.
4. I would add a question "***Are there any services not listed above that you would like to see at the new branch, or any other comments you would like to make?***"

Item 11. Review Holidays and Meeting Schedule

I would note again that the BLT and the City's [Aviation Committee](#) are scheduled to meet on the same days and at the same hour (not to mention the regular board meetings of the [Costa Mesa Sanitary District](#), in whose service area I live -- although those are at least recorded and viewable the next day on YouTube). I may be the only person in the world affected by this, but I find it unfortunate and unnecessary, since all these meeting dates and times are quite arbitrary.

I anticipate being unable to attend the present BLT meeting for this reason.