

May 16, 2022, 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 April 14, 2022, Board of Library Trustees Special Meeting

It is good to see the minutes of this special meeting, whose purpose was evidently to interview candidates for the Library Services Director position.

At the time, I was not aware I had been scheduled until after it had taken place.

I believe staff has taken steps ensure that in the future those subscribing to “eNews” regarding the Library will receive notice when BLT meeting agendas have been posted.

Item 2. Minutes of April 18, 2022, Board of Library Trustees Meeting

In the last paragraph on page 11 (page 14 of the agenda packet):

- “Laguna” was probably intended to read “Laguna Beach”.
- “prized” was surely intended to read “prize” in the next to last line.

Item 3. Patron Comments

It is nice to see the receipt of a large volume of comments (even though most are questions).

That said, I believe the information provided in response to Question 5 (agenda packet page 17) is incorrect. To the best of my knowledge it has been many years since a library card was required to use the WiFi service at the Central Library or any of the branches.

For some years, the CASSIE reservation system required those accessing the WiFi to provided a self-invented user ID to start their session (in addition to acknowledging the rules of use). But more recently, logging on has required nothing more than acknowledging the rules of use.

Is WiFi in the Sword Room, for some obscure reason, an exception to this?

Item 4. Library Activities

I will miss the quotes Director Hetherton provides at the start of these reports.

On page 22, it is not clear why the department would be investing in new windows at the Balboa Branch, since the entire building is expected to be demolished and rebuilt. Had they been damaged in some way that required immediate repair?

In the service trend charts on pages 26-29 of the agenda packet, it would be useful to include a projection of the volume of activity anticipated for the current fiscal year as whole.

For example, for circulation (page 26), the table at the top indicates YTD 21/22 is exceeding YTD 20/21 by 18%. Assuming the “1,043,629” dot for FY 20/21 in the chart at the bottom will be exceeded by a similar factor, the dot for FY 21/22 will likely fall in the vicinity of 1.23 million.

Adding that to the chart as a projected number would help to make more apparent the extent of the recovery from the COVID minimum.

Similarly, YTD reference contacts (page 27) were up 42%, suggesting FY 21/22 will end with around 111,000 requests.

Item 5. Expenditure Status Report

Although there are many caveats to such a conclusion, with two months left in the fiscal year, it looks like there are a number of categories in which the department could end the year with unspent budget: namely, the lines for which the remaining budget exceeds twice the most recent monthly expenditures.

In what categories does staff actually expect to end the year with unspent budget?

I believe that will be revealed in the item listed (on the Monitoring List) as “Financial Report Comparison of Beginning Budget to End of the Year Amended Budget” for the June 20 meeting – although the question is not about how the budget has been amended during the year (usually mostly to recognize gifts from the Friends and Foundation), but rather whether the amended budget will be completely spent.

Item 6. Appointment of Library Services Director

Eight years ago, a former City Manager and a former Board of Library Directors made an excellent choice in selecting then-Library Services Manager Tim Hetherton to succeed to the position of Library Director.

One hopes the current City Manager and BLT are making an equally good choice.

As someone who has attended BLT meetings from 2009 until their recent scheduling conflict with the City’s Aviation Committee meetings (and, without success, applied to be on the BLT those many years), it has been a pleasure to watch Ms. Hartson (and also, Rebecca) rise through the ranks of Library management and blossom into roles of increasing responsibility.

I also thought Natalie Basmaciyan did an excellent job as a very energetic and hands-on Library Services Manager, seen everywhere, during her time in that job, and would have been a strong candidate for the Director position – which must have made this a difficult choice for the City Manager and Board.

And while there is much merit in an organization that promotes internally, cross-pollination with other successful enterprises seems valuable as well. I thought Dave Curtis brought many valuable insights from Carlsbad during his brief appointment, before Natalie, as Library Services Manager, and would, also, have been a strong candidate, especially in view of his subsequent experience as Director in Orange – although I have no idea if he applied.

I have not seen the application materials cited in the staff report, but I trust Ms. Hartson, if approved, will continue to grow into an increasingly strong advocate for the Library in City management meetings, as she apparently did in winning the recent increase in the proposed materials budget. Especially with the ongoing development of a new General Plan Housing Element, I can see a possible need for the Library to modify its services to accommodate an

increasingly spread-out patron base, as well as a need to confront the many as-yet-unanticipated challenges that will come with changing technologies (and the inevitable budgetary downturns) in the coming decades.

Item 9. Marketing and Social Networking Update

Since I will be unable to attend this meeting due to the City's May Aviation Committee meeting being scheduled at the same time on the same day, I greatly appreciate the advance posting of the very thorough and very thoughtfully prepared presentation (the Aviation Committee provides no advance materials, so it is impossible to know what may transpire, or even intelligently comment on it, without attending in person) .

I also appreciate that the more lively Library marketing has not required a redesign of the NBPL that would have moved content from its familiar locations and invalidated previous links (and I hope that if staff ever does deem a major redesign necessary it will first be reviewed and approved by the BLT).

As indicated under Item 1, above, I did not receive notice of the April 14 Special Meeting of the BLT. While I appreciate the need to not irritate people not interested in such things with unwanted announcements, I trust a way can be (or has already been) found to ensure the few who are interested do receive notice.

Item 10. Lecture Hall Update

The draft minutes of the BLT's April 18 meeting allude (on page 7 of the agenda packet) to "naming opportunities" for the Library Lecture Hall.

I do not know if this is a reference to naming the entire building after a donor. But in Newport Beach, unlike some other areas, it is contrary to custom to name public buildings after people, especially living ones – as a donor would be. The "Muth Center" on the Back Bay might be noted as counter-example, but that was a County project, not a City one. Likewise, the "Crean Mariners Library" might be cited, but I don't think that naming was ever considered or approved by the City Council.

Item VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Since I will be unable to attend this meeting, the last for Director Hetherton, it is good to see (on agenda packet page 21) that there will be an opportunity at the May 24 City Council meeting to honor him for his many years of dedicated and successful service, for which I am very grateful.