

## Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 21, 2025 – 6:00 PM

Regular Meeting

Cascade Park Community Library

600 NE 136<sup>th</sup> Vancouver, WA

Community Room

Hybrid/In-Person

Kristy Morgan, *Chair*, Clark County At-Large  
Megan Dugan, *Vice Chair*, City of Vancouver  
Marie Coffey, *Secretary*, Clark County At-Large  
Mary Ann Duncan-Cole, Skamania County  
Olga Hodges, Klickitat County  
Irina Kakorina, Clark County At-Large  
Mary Williams, City of Vancouver

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**Present Board:** Kristy Morgan, Megan Dugan, Marie Coffey, Mary Ann Duncan-Cole, Olga Hodges, Irina Kakorina, Mary Williams

**Absent:**

**Present Staff:** Jennifer Giltrop, Executive Director; Alicia Gomori, Deputy Director; Rachael Reis, Branch Manager; Catrina Galicz, Finance Director; Andrea Scherer, Human Resources Director; Miranda Holtmann, Executive Assistant; Julian Mendez, Communications and Marketing Director; Lynne Caldwell, Collection and Technology Director/Public Records Officer; Justin Keeler, Outreach and Community Partnership Director/Public Records Officer; Lucien Kress, IT Director; Dave Josephson, Facilities and Fleet Director; Brenda Cameron, Library Systems Manager;

**Guests:** Daniel Gotlieb, Hillis, Clark, Martin & Peterson P.S. (virtual)

**Remote Access:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87566671288> • Meeting ID: 375 6667 1288 • Passcode: 844432 • Phone Access 206-337-9723

## Fort Vancouver Regional Library Business Meeting Minutes

### AGENDA:

1. **CALL TO ORDER** - Chair Morgan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. **AGENDA APPROVAL** – At 6:01 p.m. Mary Ann Duncan Cole made a motion to approve the agenda. Marie Coffey seconded. Motion approved with 7 out of 7 votes.
3. **CHAIR ANNOUNCEMENTS** – There were no chair announcements.
4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** – At 6:02 p.m. public comments began with the following speakers.
  - Katherine Gardner of Vancouver made a public comment about the importance of libraries in standing up against anti-intellectualism.
  - Quill Onstead of Portland made a public comment about drag queen story hour.
  - Tiffany Heine of Vancouver/Clark County made a public comment about drag queen story hour.
  - Randy Schmidt of Clark County made a public comment about drag queen story hour.
  - Emily Losness of Vancouver made a public comment about DEI.
  - Gary Wilson of Clark County made a public comment about safe programming for children.
  - Jude of Clark County made a public comment about DEI.
  - Stephanie Sanchez of Vancouver made a public comment about the Friends of Cascade Park Library.
5. **APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**– At 6:15 p.m. Mary Williams made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mary Ann Duncan Cole seconded. Motion approved with 7 out of 7 votes.
6. **REPORTS**
  - 6.1. **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS** – At 6:16 p.m. Catrina Galicz presented the following highlights for the month ending November 2024.

**Statement of Cash:** Cash at the end of November \$1 M higher than the beginning of the year. Have received substantially all revenues for the year by 11/30 but still have operating expenses to pay for December which will reduce cash for fiscal year end lower than fiscal year beginning. Meeting operating

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reserve requirement as of end of November. Galicz reminded the board that the timing of the district's revenue incoming is in April and October.

**Statement of Revenue:** The district is in great shape for year to date revenues. All but Skamania at 98% received. Cowlitz and Klickitat receipts lag a month (May and November) and Skamania lags two months behind (June and December). Other revenues are all meeting or exceeding expectations. Reimbursements for the Woodland project are held up by the ability to pay invoices (vendors compliance with state requirements) before invoices can be paid and requests made for reimbursement.

**Statement of Expenses:** Overall, the district continues to be under budget. Personnel expenses expected to be under budget due to vacancies throughout the year. Currently 11% is under spent. All other operating expenses are also trending under budget (5 to 15%) though this is expected to narrow before financial year end. Galicz reiterated how the ability to pay invoices is impacted by vendors' compliance with state regulations which can affect the Capital Outlay and other Services line item on the report.

**RECEIVE AND FILE NOVEMBER FINANCIAL STATEMENTS** – At 6:20 p.m. Mary Williams made a motion to approve receiving and filing the November 2024 financial statements. Megan Dugan seconded. Motion approved with 7 out of 7 votes.

**6.2. BRANCH REPORT: CASCADE PARK COMMUNITY LIBRARY** – At 6:22 p.m. Rachael Reis provided an update on library activities around the Cascade Park Community Library.

- Reis opened with an introduction to the branch history and the staff. Reis provided circulation and visitor numbers for 2024. Reis also shared new card numbers from the branch; 2024 is trending at 124 cards above 2023 total number of new cards, with 4173 new cards issued in 2024. Reis shared the branch goals for 2024 which include programs, partnerships and community connections.
- Reis highlighted the following programs, partnerships and community connections offered by the library;
  - Conscience Consumption program; partnered with Clark County Food Bank for 6-weeks of “seed to feed courses” on growing and cooking food, partnered with Waste Connections to do talks on recycling and held a “Trashion show” in the spring where patrons used upcycled materials as clothes and held a fashion show.
  - Teen council (group that focuses on teen programing) received a grant to participate in a program with the University of Washington iSchool and the Institute of Museum and Library Science to create programming aimed at increasing information literacy for teens.
  - 2024 saw a 10% increase in in branch participation in Summer at Your Library. Reis thanked the Cascade Park Friends and the Foundation for all of their support in those efforts. Their donation of time, funds, providing food, makes a huge difference in the success of library initiatives.
- Reis shared some of the Columbian articles published in 2024 that highlighted programming or offerings of the library.

Following the report, Reis answered trustee questions about the seed library and the logistics for the public reserving time for use of the 3D printer.

**6.3. ORGANIZATIONAL REPORT** – At 6:43 p.m. Alicia Gomori presented the following highlights of the organizational report:

- Battle Ground's Art Chat program teaches patrons a new art technique from a showcased artists and then provides an opportunity for patrons to showcase their own work.
- La Center held a Noon Year Eve's Party and had 80 patrons participate.

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- The Skamania bookmobile participated in the Starlight Parade as part of Holidays in the Gorge.
- Vancouver Audubon Society presented a lecture and activates about owls at Vancouver Mall.
- In the district-wide “Imagined Ink: Teen Writing Contest,” three of the winners claim the Vancouver Community Library as their “home” branch.
- Woodland continues to draw new patrons to the library. 335 new cards have been issued since opening in October.

## 7. BUSINESS

### 7.1. FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

**7.1.A Bibliocommons Introduction** – At 6:47 p.m. Jennifer Giltrop introduced Julian Mendez, Communications and Marketing Director, and Brenda Cameron, Library Systems Manager. Mendez was given the floor to present an introduction to Bibliocommons.

Mendez outlined the growing significance of the digital presence of FVRLibraries alongside its physical branches. While libraries are traditionally thought of as physical spaces, digital engagement has become essential in serving the community. The data from 2024 underscores this shift—1.8 million website visits surpassed 1.37 million in-person visits, and e-content checkouts (2.23 million) exceeded physical checkouts (1.5 million). However, several challenges hinder accessibility: an outdated website with poor navigation, slow loading times, inadequate translation tools, and a lack of personalized recommendations. These barriers lead to frustration and lower engagement. To maintain its mission of accessibility and community connection, FVRLibraries must address these digital shortcomings. Mendez made the analogy of a poorly maintained physical branch—where issues like broken signs or flooding would be swiftly fixed. The call to action is clear: the library must modernize its website and digital services to ensure they are as user-friendly, accessible, and functional as its physical locations.

BiblioCommons is a specialized platform designed exclusively for public libraries, integrating catalog management, events, website functionality, and personalized user experiences into a seamless system. Unlike other solutions that require multiple tools, BiblioCommons offers an all-in-one approach, leading to a high retention rate of over 90%. More than 200 libraries, including King County and Timberland Regional Library, have adopted the platform, reporting significant improvements—such as a 57% increase in checkouts and a 9% rise in visits.

The platform enhances user experience by addressing key accessibility and usability issues. It offers an intuitive interface for seniors, faster load times for parents assisting their children, accurate translations for multilingual users, and personalized recommendations for professionals seeking resources. Its clean navigation, easy-to-use search bar, and mobile-friendly design improve accessibility and functionality. Features like prominent hold buttons, real-time filtering, and content adaptation ensure users can efficiently find and borrow materials.

BiblioCommons also fosters community engagement through user-generated book ratings, lists, and reviews, allowing patrons to contribute to a shared knowledge base. Additionally, its personalized recommendations connect users with related events, blog posts, and resources.

The cost of implementing BiblioCommons is \$238,844.75 for the first year, which represents just 0.65% of FVRLibraries’ 2025 budget. The investment was anticipated, with \$300,000 earmarked, making it an under-

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budget initiative. By consolidating redundant tools, the platform is projected to save approximately \$75,000 annually. Furthermore, BiblioCommons ensures security and reliability with vendor-hosted solutions, reducing maintenance burdens on the library.

Overall, BiblioCommons offers a cost-effective, user-friendly, and community-focused solution, ensuring FVRLibraries can provide an improved and more accessible digital experience for all patrons. Giltrop added that the reason this is in front of the board is that it is a sole source and best practices and current policy dictate that the board needs to approve purchase from a sole source vendor. Giltrop also expressed that administration felt that it was important that the board understand the platform and this direction for the district and encourage discussion.

The floor was opened for questions.

Brenda Cameron answered a question about the catalog integration piece and how BiblioCommons takes all of the services and collections FVRL offers and integrates them into a much more user-friendly discoverable platform. Olga Hodges showed interest in the language functionality and Cameron clarified some of the language features in BiblioCommons.

Giltrop fielded questions about the cost and relation to the timing of the ask. She emphasized the urgent need to upgrade the library's digital presence, as the current website is outdated and there is no mobile app. Giltrop made the analogy that addressing the digital presence is akin to fixing a leaking roof or a broken bookmobile. Delaying the upgrade only postpones necessary maintenance costs, as the old site will require additional funding to keep it operational while a subpar user experience has the potential to lose patrons. Modernizing the website will ensure resources are easily discoverable and align the library's services with user expectations shaped by commercial platforms. Additionally, the investment is relatively small compared to the district's \$30 million budget.

The board engaged in discussion about the timing in relation to the levy lid lift. Coffey expressed a concern that there will be a public perception of conflicting intentions behind the ask for the levy lid lift and the roll out of a new digital interface that appears like a costly investment. Other trustees expressed a different view that the timing is optimal for the roll out to improve the quality of service provided to patrons and seeing the value in their library. This has the benefit of showing patrons more of what the library has to offer and that the library is up to date with the times in offering features and functionality expected in an online platform.

Hodges asked what the benefit would be for the staff. Cameron and Mendez expressed that, although staff has been great with managing work-arounds to make the current digital platform work, the amount of time and energy spent doing work-arounds could be devoted to other areas to enhance service to patrons. That could be better search results for front line staff helping patrons, that could also be communications staff getting word out about programming.

**7.1.B. Resolution 2025-02: Bibliocommons Purchase** – At 7:42 p.m. Mary Williams made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-02: Bibliocommons Purchase. Megan Dugan seconded. Motion approved with 7 out of 7 votes.

**7.1.C Levy Lid Lift** – At 7:45 p.m. Giltrop introduced Dan Gotlieb who joined remotely. Giltrop presented an overview of Staff Report 2025-02 which provided a summary of property tax levy law in Washington state and

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the methodology behind a levy lid lift. The board has been discussing financial projections and the need for a levy adjustment since a retreat in September 2024, followed by presentations in November and December.

FVRL, as an inter-county rural library, relies on property taxes for over 90% of its funding. Under Washington law, property tax revenue can only increase by 1% annually unless voters approve a levy lid lift. While revenue has increased by 2-3% annually due to new construction, expenses have grown at 4-5%, creating a funding gap that threatens the library's ability to sustain services.

FVRL last passed a levy lid lift in 2010, raising the rate to 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. However, the current rate has since dropped to 0.2686 cents per \$1,000. Without an increase, projections show a \$7.7 million deficit by 2026, requiring the library to cut services or deplete its fund balance, which is not sustainable.

If the board approves the resolution, the levy would be placed on the August 5th primary ballot. If passed, it would restore the rate to 50 cents per \$1,000, providing an estimated \$17 million in net income in the first year and sustaining services for approximately 12 years. This would also ensure the library maintains the necessary cash reserves to cover operations, as property tax revenue is received only twice a year.

The cost of placing the levy on the ballot ranges from \$280,000 to \$500,000, making it crucial for the measure to succeed. If approved, the library would develop a public communication plan outlining the impact of both approval and failure. Given these financial realities, the recommendation is to approve the resolution and proceed with the levy request, ensuring the library can continue providing essential services.

Gotlieb then went over the Resolution 2025-01 and the process moving forward should the resolution be approved. The resolution for the levy lid lift is a straightforward legal requirement that asks county auditors to place the measure on the August 5th ballot. If approved, the resolution must be submitted by May 2nd. While the core requirement is simply requesting the levy increase, the resolution also includes supporting statements explaining why the increase is necessary. These statements can serve as informational material for the public. The resolution includes several key provisions:

- Statement of Need – It outlines the necessity of restoring the property tax levy to 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value to sustain library operations.
- Request to County Auditors – It formally asks the auditors of Clark, Skamania, Klickitat, and part of Cowlitz counties to conduct a special election.
- Ballot Proposition – While the board drafts its preferred ballot language, state law ultimately grants county prosecutors the authority to finalize it.
- Voter Pamphlet Inclusion – The resolution states that FVRL will participate in the voter pamphlet process, including preparing an explanatory statement (handled by legal counsel) and providing lists of pro and con committee members.
- Election Costs – FVRL must share the election costs, which are distributed among jurisdictions based on their ballot participation.
- Legal Protections – A "survival clause" ensures that if any part of the resolution is invalidated, the rest remains enforceable.
- Submission Directive – It directs the executive director to deliver a certified copy of the resolution to county auditors by the deadline. Gotlieb provided a note on the process at this point. Should the board adopt this resolution Gotlieb's office will prepare the explanatory statement and share it with staff for review before it is submitted to county auditors.

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Gotlieb reminded the board that lid lift propositions only require a simple majority (50% +1) to pass, unlike bond measures that need a 60% supermajority.

Finally, Washington law imposes restrictions on how the library district can advocate for the measure. While the district can provide neutral fact sheets, it cannot use resources to campaign for the levy. Board members may personally support it but cannot do so in their official capacities or use district property, funds, or facilities for advocacy. Gotlieb and Giltrop fielded clarifying questions from the board on this point.

**7.1.D. Resolution 2025-01: Levy Lid Lift** At 8:13 p.m. Megan Dugan made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-02: Levy Lid Lift. Marie Coffey seconded. Motion approved unanimously with 7 out of 7 votes.

## **7.2. POLICY AND NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

**Library Privileges Policy (first reading)** – At 8:16 p.m. Giltrop presented an overview of why this policy is under review. The library sets an annual non-resident borrower fee, and this year, a proposed change aims to make the fee more equitable by aligning it more closely with what the average district taxpayer contributes. Currently, non-residents pay significantly less, which raises fairness concerns, especially as the library prepares for a levy lid lift. The board is being asked to consider this policy change now, with a vote on both the methodology and the specific fee amount in February. The proposal will include a comparison between the new calculation and the existing method to provide a clear understanding of the impact.

Giltrop answered questions and provided clarification about who the non-resident account holders generally are.

## **7.3. Committee Assignments**

At 8:22 p.m. Chair Morgan presented the 2025 FVRL Board Committee Assignments.

**8. BOARD COMMENT** - at 8:22 p.m. Chair Morgan commented thanks to Rachel Reis on her presentation and Julian Mendez on their thorough presentation.

Mary Williams commented her thanks to Cascade Park Community Library her “home” branch which has always been warm and inviting with nice staff.

Olga Hodges commented on how inviting the branch was when she arrived and commended the work that is done here.

**9.** Setting for next regular meeting: Tuesday, February 18 at 6:00 p.m. at Vancouver Community Library. It will be a hybrid (in-person/online) meeting.

**10. ADJOURNMENT** – At 8:24 p.m. Marie Coffey made a motion to adjourn, Mary Williams seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.