

## Comments on July 8, 2013 BLT Agenda Items

Comments on the Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees agenda items, submitted by:

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### **Item 4. Approval of Minutes**

#### **May 6, 2013, Regular Meeting**

I submitted [written comments](#) on these draft minutes at the June 3 meeting, and found no fault with them

#### **June 3, 2013, Regular Meeting**

1. I would like to thank Elaine for responding to the earlier written comments by replacing the ambiguous “motion carried” in earlier minutes with a clear indication of the vote tallies on the action items, and by using the numbered agenda as a template for the meeting notes. I hope the Board approves of the change in format, for at least for me this makes the minutes much easier to follow, as well as probably easier to produce.
  - a. As an example, on page 3 of the present minutes, under “**3. Commercial Activity in Library**” there is a reference to “*the Study Room Policy that was reviewed at the April 1, 2013 Board of Library Trustees meeting.*” Although that item can be easily found on the April 1 [agenda](#) (Item 5.B.2), locating it, and reviewing the action taken in the old-format [minutes](#) approved by the Board is a challenge (it appears near the bottom of page 3). In the new numbered minutes I think the discussion and action would stand out much more prominently.
  - b. Comparing that action recorded in the April 1 minutes to the *Study Room Policy* currently [posted](#) on the Library website one might note:
    - i. It would be helpful, as I believe Trustee Grant suggested, to provide clear revision dates on *all* policies so one can be sure what version one is reading.
    - ii. The requested removal of the capital “I” in the word “Items” in the second paragraph from the end remains to be accomplished.
2. On page 1 of the present draft minutes, under “**Roll Call**,” and again on page 4, just before Item 5, the last name of then-resident and now Trustee John **Prichard** is inadvertently spelled “Pritchard.”

### **Item 5.A.1. Customer Comments**

1. Comment #11, suggesting the installations of air hand dryers in the restrooms, may have been prompted by the current paper towel dispensers, which simply do not work well, producing a shower of unused towels littering the floors. I do not know if the problem is with the dispensers or with the way the manufacturer folds the towels we buy, but I have observed the problem throughout the City facilities, not just at the libraries.

### **Item 5.A.2. Library Activities**

1. The quality and usefulness of this report, to be archived with the Board's materials, would be enhanced by a clear indication of the range of dates it covers and the date on which it was prepared. It continues to be my impression that the written reports are for the period that was reported on orally at the prior Board meeting.
2. On page 1:
  - a. Under "**Circulating Nooks**" it is unclear where, or how, the devices will be made available for checkout. Will they be at Central only? Is Board guidance needed?
  - b. Under "**Branches**" it remains unclear to me what the pros and cons of the "*SPOT Wi-Fi management system*" are. Previously, Wi-Fi was freely available at Mariners Branch. Now it requires a library card for sign in, making it impossible to use a library and personal device at the same time. Why?
3. On page 2:
  - a. Under "**Teen Services**" I had to look up what "YAAC" (*Young Adult Advisory Council*) and "SRP" (*Summer Reading Program*) stood for. According to the library website, the [YAAC](#) was formed in 1994 and is still active and consists of 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders who advise library staff on teen services. Was this group created by the Trustees? And whoever formed it, why is there no interaction with the Board? Why is a review of the current state and adequacy of Teen and Children's Services not on the Trustee's Monitoring List?
  - b. Under "**Construction**" when last I looked the *24 Carrots* fast food concession on the west side of the new Civic Green entryway at Central still said "coming soon." I have also seen ads seeking an occupant for the similar concession space on the east side of the entryway. Are the Trustees in agreement regarding the best use for that space?
  - c. Under "**Passport Services**" the Trustees may at some point wish to review how much this non-literacy [service](#) costs, and, given the limited hours, how it complements similar passport services [available elsewhere](#). I believe the City Clerk, who previously provided the service at the old City Hall, felt it cost more than could be recouped through the allowed \$25 processing fee.
4. On page 4: In the "**Database Stats**" table the significance of the asterisks after three of the database names is unexplained. It does not seem related to the Morningstar footnote at the bottom of the page.
5. On page 6: In the "**Annual Library System Statistics**" plots it would seem helpful to plot an extrapolated estimate of activity levels for the current fiscal year (FY2012-2013 at the time of this report), to show how it compares to prior years.

### ***Item 5.A.3. Expenditure Status Report***

1. Since the printout is dated "07/02/2013" the numbers listed are presumably close to the year-end totals, suggesting the Board may wish to review and discuss the categories that ended substantially over or under budget.
2. I continue to think the Trustees, to fulfill their City Charter Section 708 duties, should be more active in reviewing the allocation of funds among the budget categories and monitoring on a monthly basis the detailed expenses within those categories, including the catch-all "NOC" (Not Otherwise Charged?) categories. The public in general has little or no idea what, specifically, the money is going for. By contrast, the boards of many other governmental agencies routinely review (in public, on the Consent Calendar) the "warrants" for all checks to be paid each month.

### ***Item 5.A.4. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List***

1. It might be helpful to "rotate" the list to put the items with assigned dates *above* those with no scheduled review date.
2. As noted under Item 5.A.2, it seems remarkable the Board does not routinely monitor the status and adequacy of the Library's major service segments (Children, Teens and Adults), nor formally interact with other groups possibly making policy recommendations to Library Staff, such as the Young Adult Advisory Council,.
3. In that same vein, I think the Trustees should take a more active role *developing* (rather than simply approving) the annual "Wish Lists" presented to the Friends and the Foundation.
4. I also feel that to avoid an overconcentration of library services at Central, there should be an annual review of the systems adequacy as a City-wide service, including the possible need for new or re-invigorated satellite branches. In that connection, the Board may wish to consider meeting at locations other than Central, as it formerly did with the Study Sessions held at the branches.

### ***Item 5.B.2. Report on the Laptop and iPad Circulation Policy***

1. Since no written report was posted prior to the meeting it is difficult to comment on this item. In fact, I don't think the provisional policy approved at the June 3<sup>rd</sup> Board meeting has been posted to the recently revamped [Library Policies](#) page found under "About Us" on the Library website (which continues, as best I can tell, to not list a number of policies).
2. Since no changes were recorded in the Draft Minutes from June 3<sup>rd</sup>, I assume the current policy is the one presented there in connection with that meeting's [Item 5.B.1](#). With regard to that policy:
  - a. The first sentence of Rule 2 is awkwardly written. It could be condensed to "***Laptops may be checked out at the reference desks at the Central, Mariners and Corona del Mar branches, and from the circulation desk at Balboa branch.***"

- b. The verb “**present**” in Rule 3 where it says “*Customers must **present** a valid NBPL card*” is clearly incorrect, since Rule 4 makes it clear one does *not* have to physically *present* their card. It should be changed to something like “**have**,” “**own**” or “**possess**” or, perhaps better, the entire point could be condensed to: “3. Customers ~~must present a valid NBPL card and~~ must be current in the Library's circulation system.”
- c. Rule 4 may add clarity for some readers, but it is redundant with the other rules and could be deleted.
- d. The two-hour initial checkout time in Rule 8 is inconsistent with the “1 hour + automated 20 min extensions until a waiting list forms” policy listed for “desktops and laptops” on the Library’s [“Computers and Wi-Fi”](#) webpage.
- e. The renewal period intended to be allowed under Rule 9 is not well specified.
  - i. It is probably meant to be 2 hours as in Rule 8 and as it was under the manual checkout system, but if the devices are placed in the computer-managed CASSIE system, might the initial checkout and renewal intervals be shorter as they are for desktop work stations, and as the webpage implies they already are for laptops?
  - ii. As Trustee Grant pointed out at an earlier meeting, there is both a logical and a policy problem with the Rule 9 requirement that renewals not be allowed unless one of that device is on the shelf.
    1. The logical problem is that the person returning a device when another is *not* on the shelf can immediately demand their right to check that item back out, since the moment they return theirs there *is* one on the shelf. This is why CASSIE prohibits renewals only when there are names on the waiting list for that variety of device.
    2. If the policy desire is to have a device available for *new* customers whenever possible, it would be necessary to impose an additional rule restricting existing users from checking a device out again for some time after being forced by the policy to return one, but it is very difficult to imagine how that could be implemented in a fair and sensible way. The Orange County Public Library, for example, when I last checked, allowed patrons only a *single* 1-hour maximum session per day at their desktop workstations. Once a card holder logged off, even after 10 minutes of use, they could not log back on for the remainder of the day. This strongly favors new walk-in customers, but it leaves large quantities of equipment unused (or left in a “locked” condition) by customers who might wish to log back in.
    3. The CASSIE system is far superior, and by allowing brief automatic renewals when there is no waiting list gives preference

to new users without unnecessarily barring existing users from continued use. The CASSIE system works well when the session time is coordinated with the number of devices available. For example, at Mariners with 20 desktops and a 20 minute renewal cycle, a new patron expects, on average, to have to wait only 1 minute until an existing patron is given a “your session is about to end message.” Considering the 5-minute grace period given the existing patron, this means the new user rarely has to wait more than 6 minutes, unless there is a long waiting list. On the other hand, at Corona del Mar, with only 4 desktops, and a 1 hour initial session time, the wait can be quite long. As a result the same time policies may not be appropriate at all branches.

- f. Rule 10 needs work. First, as indicated in Rule 2, return is to the circulation desk *only* at the Balboa branch. Second, the implication of special treatment applied to devices “*checked out less than 2.5 hours before closing*” is both confusing and redundant with the requirement that all devices be returned at least 30 minutes before closing, and should be deleted. Third, the 30 minute rule makes sense only at Central. At Mariners, and even more so at the smaller branches, it unnecessarily inconvenience the patrons since collecting the devices 15 or even 10 minutes before closing would be more than adequate.
- g. Finally, like all policies, this policy should include a clear revision date.

### ***Item 5.B.3. Media Center Policy and Use Agreement***

1. Again, the absence of a written staff report posted prior to the meeting makes meaningful comment difficult.
2. The Library homepage continues to list the Media center as “*coming soon.*” It would seem helpful to add some further explanation of what it will contain, and how it will operate. If the Trustees are still working out the rules, it could say that.

### ***Item 5.B.4. Commercial Activity in Library***

1. Again, in the absence of a written staff report it is difficult to comment, but in considering this matter, the Board should be aware not only of the *Study Room Policy* and the *Use of the Newport Beach Public Library Policy*, mentioned in the draft minutes of the June 3, 2013 meeting, but also Board Policy [I-7](#) (Library Meeting Rooms) and several [City Council Policies](#). In particular:
  - a. Policy [B-5](#) (Vincent Jorgensen Community Room in Library) -- related to a rentable room at the Mariners Branch.
  - b. Policy [B-4](#) (Commercial Uses in Public Parks)
  - c. Policy [B-13](#) (Public Use of City Facilities) – allows “limited commercial use,” although “commercial” is defined, it is unclear what special rules apply to such activities.

2. The Board should also be aware that City Charter Section [602\(d\)](#) requires the City Attorney to provide them with a written response to any questions they might have, should they wish to request one. This would allow the Board, and public, to discuss the response without having it filtered through a third party.

### **Item 5.C. Monthly Reports**

Not knowing what will be reported, it is impossible to provide meaningful comments in advance of the meeting.

### **Item 7. Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items**

1. [Item 8](#) on the City Council's [July 9, 2013, agenda](#) is their consideration of a new 25 year cooperative agreement between the City and the private non-profit Friends of OASIS, detailing how the City and Friends share the duties, responsibilities and expenses related to operating the City's senior center. This replaces an agreement formulated in 2005, some 28 years after the center was initially established. I do not know if the Board of Library Trustees has any formal agreement with either the Friends of the Library or the Library Foundation, or if it feels one is needed. If formal agreements don't presently exist, it might be wise to review whatever informal agreements or understandings exist and consider whether they should be formalized. Again, as in the second comment to Item 5.B.4, above, the Trustees are free to ask for a written opinion from the City Attorney.
2. On the City website I note:
  - a. When one hovers over "*Departments and Services*" on the [homepage](#) and then scrolls down, and hovers over "*Library Services*," a secondary drop-down menu appears. Most of the topical links provided appear to be outdated, for most go to the Library homepage, rather than to the specific sub-service indicated.
  - b. Passport services are still listed under the City Clerk Department, rather than under Library Services, and although the [Clerk's information](#) notes the change to the library, it does not link to the more extensive information on the [library's website](#).
  - c. It would be helpful if the final approved BLT meeting minutes were [archived](#) in the same machine-readable PDF format as the other meeting documents. At present they are in an "image only" format, which means they are not searchable.
  - d. The Board might also wish to consider the pros and cons of advocating for having Library Board related documents, including historical ones, integrated into the City's Laserfiche "[Document Center](#)," along with them of such bodies as the City Council and Planning Commission, rather than having them stored separately.
3. On the library website:
  - a. It is good to see the July 8 date of the Board of Library Trustees meeting prominently mentioned on the [homepage](#), although discovering when and where

on July 8 the meeting will be held seems to left as a challenge to those who see the notice.

- b. The [Trustee's page](#) needs to be updated to reflect the new membership of the Board. It also continues to announce an amendment to the BLT By-Laws proposed for consideration at the October 1, 2012 meeting. That no longer seems necessary since the link to "*view the charter for the Board of Library Trustees*" is really a link to the current By-Laws as amended at that meeting.
  - c. I continue to think the Library [Site Map](#) could be made more comprehensive (there are pages below the lowest levels shown), and the "*Site Search*" function (found in an alternate drop down menu in the "*Search Catalog*" box) could be improved by giving it a more Google-like operation, as on the City website: that is, offering suggested corrections for likely misspellings, etc.
4. Finally, the first Board meeting of the 2013-2014 fiscal year seems an appropriate time to remind the Trustees of the resources available for independently educating themselves about the rights and responsibilities of library boards.
- a. The 1998 [CALTAC Tool Kit](#), prepared by *California Association of Library Trustees and Commissioners* (an organization, [caltac.org](http://caltac.org)), that seems to have been absorbed into the *California Public Library Advocates* in association with the *California State Library*, remains helpful in explaining the difference between administrative and advisory boards, and the relation of both to library staff and City Councils.
    - i. Under City Charter [Section 708](#), the Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees is closest to an administrative board.
    - ii. It may be of interest that the Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees was created by City [Ordinance 166](#) on June 7, 1920, at a time when the City was itself governed by a five-member Board of Trustees, and that the BLT predates the City Charter by 34 years.
    - iii. The maintenance of clear records such as Ordinance 166 begs the question of whether the Board of Library Trustees should occasionally act by formal resolution so that the record of significant actions is clearer than the notes maintained in the minutes.
  - b. A Google search on "[library board handbook](#)" and similar terms yields of wealth of additional information from other jurisdictions on making library boards more effective and productive, including the one from [New York](#) and many others.
  - c. The Board and library staff may also wish to be reminded of Article II, Section 7 of the [By-Laws](#) regarding conflicts of interest. Prior to the 2012 election, [Section 608](#) of the City Charter prohibited the Library from entering into *any* contract in which a Trustee had a financial interest. That rule still seems to be reflected in the By-Laws, although the Charter restriction has been substantially relaxed.