

# May 19, 2014, BLT Agenda Item Comments

Comments on the Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees (BLT) agenda items, submitted by:  
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## ***Item 4. Approval of Minutes (April 7, 2014, Meeting)***

Changes to the passage shown in *italics* are suggested in **strikeout underline** format.

Page 5, paragraph 1 (Item 5.C.3): “*Trustee Robyn Grant attended the last meeting in which the Friends Meeting Room chairs were discussed, and **they** have since arrived at the Library and **are** being used in the Friends Meeting Room.*”

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

1. Regarding the *Facilities* topic in the *Support Services Coordinator* report on page 2, I do not recall the details of the new Central Library parking lot book drop having been discussed at the Board meetings. I assume the “directional signage” planned by staff will alert patrons searching for parking to use the existing drops in the building wall that a drive-up alternative is available. I would again suggest that such signage would also be useful at the Mariners Branch, where the location of the drive-up book drop on a separate street is also far from obvious.
2. The library usage statistics on pages 6 and 7 could be taken to indicate a remarkable upsurge in activity at the Central Library and a shift of usage away from the branches to Central. However, I would note that although the year to date count of “*Customers Served*” at Central is up over 50%, all other indicators of library-related activity at Central (reference contacts, circulation and program attendance) are up by only about 10% (an uptick which might in part be attributed to the construction closures at Central in the 2012-13 comparison fiscal year).
  - a. It would be interesting to know if staff has a sense of how much the large increase in the *Customers Served* count at Central with only a very modest increase in the other indicators of library activity at Central is due to counting cut-through traffic or to use of the new study areas without participation in other library offerings.
  - b. Correcting for the possible overcounting of customers at the Central Library, is it possible that traditional library usage is declining as the branch statistics (all down year to date) might suggest? Or is the apparent decline at the branches an artifact caused by artificially increased branch activity in the FY2012-13 comparison year due to the construction closures at Central?
  - c. Would the number of WiFi sign-ins be a useful activity indicator to monitor?

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

1. I believe the printing saying “ACCOUNTING PERIOD: 10/14” means this is the report for April 2014, and because it was prepared on “05/14/2014” it represents the full month’s expenditures – unlike similar recent reports which, because of the BLT meeting date on the first Monday, were usually printed before the accounting period had closed.

2. Of the line items reported, it continues to appear that item “7211 HEALTH/DENTAL/VISION PT” is grossly misbudgeted: the expenditures each month are roughly equal to the amount planned for the entire year.
3. Although not strictly on the agenda for discussion, the *Support Services Coordinator* Activity Report (Item 5.A.2, above) alludes to the fact that staff has presented a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2014-15 to the City Council, and for public review.
  - a. Given the Board’s [Charter Section 708\(c\)](#) responsibility to make recommendations regarding the budget, it would seem useful for the Board to review [what was submitted to the Council](#) and to discuss how it differs from [what the Trustees reviewed](#) in [February](#).
  - b. The comparison is complicated by the fact that in what the Board reviewed in February the line items are reported for the department as a whole, whereas in what is now being reviewed the budgets for each division within the department (including the *Cultural & Arts* expenditures, which may or may not have been included in what the Board reviewed) are shown separately.
  - c. As best I can tell, the x recommendations for both total *Salaries & Benefits* and total *Operating Expenses* are slightly higher than the Board approved, although the \$2,000 for *Capital Outlays* remains the same. I find the latter remarkably low compared to what the library has invested in new equipment and furniture in prior years. If the plan is to meet those necessary capital outlay expenses with mid-year budget “corrections” (funded perhaps by gifts from the Friends and Foundation), I don’t find that very transparent budgeting.
  - d. Also as best I can tell, rather than increasing line item “7211 HEALTH/DENTAL/VISION PT” to reflect the roughly \$50,000 of annual expense that seems to occur in that category across a variety of divisions, the requested budget amount appears to have reverted from the amended budget amount to \$5,000 in the current year back to \$0 set aside for the coming year. I find this puzzling.
  - e. It is also confusing to have large and essential departmental expenses, such as the library’s IT needs, accounted for elsewhere in the City budget. This makes it difficult for the Trustees to see how much it takes to run the library, and whether it is adequately funded.

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

“*Adult Services Update*” is listed for both the May 19 and June 16 meetings. Is this a misprint?

#### **Item 5.B.1. Donor Wall**

1. It might have been useful to provide a diagram indicating which wall is under consideration.
2. I have difficulty telling from the report if the proposal is simply to put a name on a wall or to create a new place for recognizing multiple donors (that is a new donor wall similar to the one that exists on the outside façade of the Friends Room).

3. I also have difficulty understanding what is being asked of the Board. Normally the Board is asked to accept donations **from** the Foundation per [City Charter Section 708\(f\)](#). Here is it being asked to “accept” a donation **to** the Foundation, which seems to be a matter outside the purview of the Board. Alternatively, if the Foundation has some hesitancy about accepting this gift on its own, why is the donation not being made directly to the library as the City Charter envisions?

### **Item 5.B.2. Sound Lab Policy and Media Center Use Policy**

#### **NBPL Sound Lab Policy**

##### **General comments:**

1. Is the Sound Lab intended to be reserved for use by a single patron (or group of related users) at a time? If so, why is cell phone use banned? Who would it be disturbing?
2. The policy should have a clearly stated adoption date.

##### **Specific suggested corrections to draft:**

3. *Users can make 4 hour reservations to use the Sound Lab. Reservations will be held for 10 minutes after they are scheduled to begin and will be considered canceled **at if not started by** that time.*
4. *Use of the **Sounds Sound** Lab will be checked out on the user's Newport Beach Public Library account and a photo ID will be held.*
10. ***Permanently saving Saving** work on Sound Lab computers is prohibited. Users must save their work on an external memory source.*

#### **Newport Beach Public Library Media Center Use Policy**

I have the same suggested corrections to policy clauses 3 & 10 (here numbered 9) as above. This policy should also have a clearly stated adoption date.

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

I don't know how the Trustees receive the agenda and staff reports, but the Board should be aware that although library staff announced the present meeting on the City and library websites, through circumstances beyond library staff's control the City's new [NovusAgenda](#) distribution system malfunctioned, making both the agenda topics and the staff reports inaccessible to the public from about 6 p.m. on Friday to 7 a.m. on Monday. Hopefully it will work better in the future.