Yakima Valley Libraries
Board of Trustees
Special Meeting – Board Retreat
Monday, February 23, 2026– 9:00 a.m.
Delta Dental Equity Hall – Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences

I. **OPENING OF MEETING:**
Board Member Present: President Bradley Liebrecht, Vice-President Jameson Watkins, Secretary Judith Panagakos, Trustee Mary MacKintosh, Trustee Noemi Yaneli Sanchez

Staff Present: Executive Director-Candelaria Mendoza, Library Services Director-Francisco Garcia-Ortiz, Accounting Manager- Lucia Nesta-Espinoza, Human Resources Manager- Maria Hernandez, Community Engagement & Impact Manager- Sully Gama, Regional Library Manager Region 2- Heather Campbell, Facilities Manager-Susan Miller, IT Manager-Melissa Vickers, Collection Development & Circulation Manager- LeNee Gatton, Technical Services & NWRR Manager -Sherrie Prentice, Public Services Manager- Rondi Downs, Executive Assistant-Michael Huff
Absent:

Visitors: No Visitors

Call to Order

Trustee Liebrecht called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

a. Determination of quorum
Trustee Liebrecht determined a quorum of the Trustees was present.

b. Recognition of visitors

c. Approval of the agenda

MOTION: Trustee MacKintosh moved to approve the agenda as presented. Trustee Watkins seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

II. **Public Comment:** There were no members of the public present.

III. Business

a. **Strategic Plan Overview/Updates**

Key Indicators:
Mendoza let the Trustees know that the MMT made the decision to continue with the percentages that were approved by the Trustees in 2025. She then communicated the progress made since 2023. For additional context, the PowerPoint slides are available in the Yakima Central Boardroom January through April Board Packet Binder.

Referencing the Key Indicators, she explained that the circulation and active users are seeing dips. Progress, however, has been seen in program attendance, digital access, and social media. She said YVL would continue to focus on physical circulation and early literacy, and added that unmet goal percentages carry over from year to year. In addition, YVL will focus on library visits and active borrowers and will implement strategies to make it easier to apply for a library card. IT manager Vickers was then asked about digital users and if she had a count for them. She informed the Board that she would look into that number and try to get them that statistic.
Trustee Watkins asked if the management team would cover the budget as it related to the goals. He asked whether, since the Library is seeing a decrease in the physical collection and an increase in the digital collection, it would make sense to invest in this shift. Mendoza expressed that YVL's Collection Development & Circulation Manager, Gatton, has been researching options. She said there was a disruption in the collection development space following the closure of Baker & Taylor, which led the Library to engage with other vendors. Mendoza stated that, while some elements remain unknown, the management team will

continue to assess the situation to inform future budgetary decisions. Trustee Watkins asked how YVL is handling the tension between the demand for physical and digital materials and how the Library is adjusting its budget in response. He asked whether there is a need to curate a population-centered physical collection, whether there is a larger trend toward digital, and, if so, to direct the budget accordingly. Mendoza said this has been a topic when she meets with other directors. Since the price of digital materials is far higher, there has been an effort to look at the legislative side to potentially change how they are purchased. She then provided context on the history of the digital collection market, and Gatton added that YVL has adjusted its budget over the years to align with demand.

Trustee Liebrecht said that, given the challenges of levy lid lifts, it may be time to inform the public about how the Library budgets for materials. Mendoza agreed and stated that YVL is hoping to approach the Board again with more options and to workshop the allocation of funds. Trustee Liebrecht asked that the Board be updated every three months on how much has been spent between the two. Mendoza then alluded to the agenda topic of surveys and to potentially including a question about people's preference between physical and digital materials.

Trustee Liebrecht then asked the management team where they think YVL should be putting its expansion efforts. He expressed the need for more space and asked where that is going and whether it means a new library. Community Engagement & Impact Manager, Gama, said that Toppenish could use a new location because the library spaces in the Lower Valley aren't large enough to host regional programming. Mendoza then thanked the Board for their work in assisting YVL in its effort to be fiscally responsible and said revisiting the organization's footprint is a needed conversation. Gama added that programming has been more intentional about regional programming, which is why it will take place at the same four locations to establish consistency.

Before moving on, Mendoza asked the Board if they were comfortable keeping the goals the same as last year. Trustee Liebrecht said yes and briefly commented on the decline of library visitors. Mendoza replied that YVL needs to find a new normal.

Mendoza then reiterated the key indicator goals to meet by 2028 in the slide deck.

She continued: once a new normal is determined, she will share it with the Board by the end of 2026 to use for the last two years of the strategic plan. Trustee Panagakos asked about the goals that have been met or exceeded, and whether it would make sense to update them or calibrate them with new ones. Mendoza said the management team would consider that and see if there is an element for growth or to add another indicator.

b. **Services and Facilities Assessment: Potential LCIP Proposals**

Mendoza said the presentation would cover the Library Capital Improvement Program and forecasted projects. Library Services Director, Garcia-Ortiz, then presented on this topic. Beginning with phase one, he said the focus was to start connecting with the contract cities to update agreements in 2025 with the goal of implementing new agreements for fiscal year 2026. The Town of Naches and the City of Granger now have updated three-year contracts with YVL until 2028, while the City of Mabton has an updated one-year contract through the end of 2026. The most recent update on Naches is that the Friends of the Naches Library are fundraising and have met with Mendoza to help be on the same page. For Mabton, Mendoza is meeting with the Mayor on February 25th to discuss 2027 and beyond. Trustee Liebrecht asked if there is a contingency plan in the case that a contract were to end. Mendoza said the hope is to gauge their intentions after the meetings, but she will continue to have conversations with the Board about YVL's footprint. There is also the potential, she said, to assess YVL's owned building and to hire a third party to assist with future decision-making
The next priority is to focus on the buildings YVL owns for remodels and project submissions to the WA State Library Capital Improvement Program (LCIP); this is an ongoing priority. Garcia-Ortiz continued: YVL has submitted Yakima Central and Sunnyside to the LCIP for the 2025-2027 funding cycle. He said the Yakima Central updates are scheduled for the Fall of 2026 to include asbestos abatement, a new elevator, and a new sump pump. Trustee Panagakos asked if the library would need to close during the abatement. Mendoza said no because the area would be contained. She said it's more likely the library will close while the sump pump is replaced due to the smell. Garcia-Ortiz added that YVL would now begin planning for the LCIP 2027-2029 funding cycle for the West Valley and Selah Library locations by preparing proposals.

LCIP 2027-2029: West Valley and Selah Library Potential Proposals

Garcia-Ortiz presented an overview of the LCIP: It's a grant funded by the State of Washington through the Washington

State Department of Commerce. They provide grants to public libraries for capital projects, including acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation. Public libraries operated by governmental units are eligible applicants, and a 50% match is required. He said the grant may cover up to half of the total eligible project costs, with a maximum of $2 million per project. He added that funds are restricted to capital costs, such as acquisition, construction, or renovation of public library facilities, and generally do not include operating costs.

Priorities for Each Library

Facilities Manager, Miller, then presented on the potential projections for the West Valley and Selah libraries. She said the list of priorities includes core infrastructure, such as HVAC, plumbing, roof, electrical, etc., and then innovative technology, followed by creating safe and welcoming spaces.

West Valley:

She said the core infrastructure project would be to install a hard water softening system for the entire building. Then, moving to innovative technology, she said YVL would install an automated material handling machine (AMH), which would require hiring a contractor. She communicated that these systems can significantly enhance library operation by accelerating check-in and sorting, as well as reducing return-to-shelf times from days to twenty-four hours. Trustee Panagakos asked whether the automated check-in machine could be used at Central as well. Mendoza replied that it would, but the installation at West Valley would serve as the pilot location, since it has the highest circulation. The other project would be a through-wall automatic check-in book return. In the transition to the safe and welcoming spaces category, Miller said the project would include mobile shelving to replace all kids' shelving in the middle of the space, opening it up, and providing staff with more options. Another project is to build study/meeting rooms that look like pods to meet the needs of our patrons. Trustee Liebrecht asked where the rooms would go. Miller stated they would be placed in the teen booth area, which would work well once mobile shelving is installed to make more room. Trustee Watkins added that it would be important to pay attention to the sound ratings, and Miller replied that they have already been reviewed with the vendor. Lastly, solar lighting should be installed along the perimeter of the parking lot. She said it would be a safety improvement to help patrons in the dark and prevent tripping hazards. Trustee Watkins asked if there was an estimated cost. Miller shared that the tentative budget for the West Valley project is $1,400,000; the LCIP grant would cover 50% and YVL would cover the remaining 50%, or $700,000 each.

Mendoza said the management team continues to collect quotes and will present them to the Board at a future board meeting. Trustee Panagakos asked about the cost of the parking lot solar lighting. Miller said it's about $4,500. Trustee Panagakos said it could make sense to complete that project earlier if needed. It was asked how large the meeting pods were, and Miller said she wasn't sure of the dimensions, but they should fit in the space. Mendoza added that there would be a reduction in the collection as well before the mobile shelving was implemented, which would make more room. Miller added that the shelving isn't as tall either and that the children's space is being reenvisioned to make additional room for the pods. Mendoza said additional room would be made in the reduction of the computer lab area. She added that pictures of the space could be taken to help illustrate the plan and would share them with the Board. Regarding the timeline, Mendoza said the funding cycle is for 2027, and she would hear about YVL's submitted projects in mid-summer.

Selah:

Miller continued to present the projects for the Selah Library. For core infrastructure, the library needs two new rooftop HVAC units (RTUs) and to resurface its parking lot. She said the two current RTUs are from 2004 and are at the end of life. Then, for the second core infrastructure project to resurface the parking lot, she said it is needed because the current lot was done with asphalt. This has caused deterioration, including cracks and holes, that need to be addressed. She said that having the parking lot resurfaced will address the issue and provide lasting benefits for the next 15 to 25 years. Moving to innovative technology projects, Miller said YVL is looking at installing through-wall automated check-in book returns (RFID), which would require hiring a construction contractor. She said the contractor would be needed to create the opening for the machine and would hire a subcontractor to install the network/communication cabling. She stated that the RFID system can reduce return-to-shelf time, thereby significantly enhancing library operations by accelerating the check-in process. Lastly, she presented the projects that would fall under the safe and welcoming spaces category: mobile shelving, a new circulation desk, and security cameras. She said the mobile shelving would replace shelving in the kids' area, creating a more functional space for staff and programming. She continued to share about the circulation desk that would provide a smaller footprint in the library. She said it would make the space more open and welcoming, as well as more user-friendly for both patrons and staff. She communicated that the tentative budget for the Selah project is $215,000; the LCIP grant would cover 50% and YVL would cover the remaining 50%, or $107,500 each.

Mendoza communicated the need to consider what would happen if the Library did not qualify for the grant and whether YVL should move forward with some projects regardless. She said the Selah infrastructure projects would be worth considering in addition to the solar lighting for the West Valley parking lot.

She stated it would be helpful to check in with the Board about how involved they would like to be or plan another retreat to explore and workshop a facilities plan. She also mentioned forming a couple of small subcommittees if the Board would like to do so. Among the additional projects, she noted that Yakima Central Library needs to be critically assessed to plan for the next five to ten years, given all that needs to be done in the building. Trustee Panagakos asked to present to the entire Board the scope of the projects at Central and how significant the amount of work would be. Mendoza said the plan for 2026 is to evaluate Central, which would include hiring a third party to inform which walls can be moved, etc., and to discuss potential expansion options. Trustee Liebrecht asked whether it would be worth considering relocating the Service Center staff, and Trustee Panagakos asked when the consultant would be hired. Mendoza said that it would depend on the Board's feedback, but acquiring more information up front before the consultant is hired would be something the Library can do. She said the plan now is to collect more information by this July. Trustee Liebrecht said he would like a timeline.

Next, Mendoza communicated the need to assess how many visitors would be needed to constitute a physical location. On the idea of building a new building, Trustee Watkins advised building above anticipated growth to ensure the most value from current construction costs. Mendoza asked the Trustees what the next step would be, and Trustee Panagakos said the Board needs a comprehensive assessment of Yakima Central, which would also contribute to YVL's future blueprint, and to hire the third-party consultant just for Yakima Central at this time.

Miller added that YVL does not know what is required for the location to be a publicly usable space. She also stated that she doesn't know whether this extra work and potential cost would require compliance with LEEDS requirements. Mendoza said it would depend on YVL's agreements with the non-owned building owners and their willingness to do a remodel with the Library. She said she would work with Accounting Manager, Nesta-Espinoza, to determine how many projects could be worked on before depleting any funds. She added that the management team would pull more information together concerning the Central projects and regroup at the March Board meeting to discuss the need for a third-party consultant. Trustee Liebrecht said to have this information by the April meeting.

c. **Trustee Recruitment Process**

The Board reviewed their highest-rated applicants. Based on the applications and questionnaires each candidate was required to complete, the Board used their rating criteria to select the top two candidates in ranking order.

1. Victor DeLong
2. Jacquelyn Nissen

MOTION: Trustee Liebrecht moved to approve the two candidates for recommendation to the County Commissioners. Trustee Watkins Seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

d. **Strategic Plan Surveys**

Garcia-Ortiz then presented the 2026 survey project. He said the surveys would be sent to patrons, staff, and partners of the Library to gauge customer service and programming satisfaction, as well as staff and partnership satisfaction.

Customer Service Survey:
He communicated that this survey would launch in 2026, be sent to patrons annually from April 1st to the 30th, and that the management team would report the results in June to the Board. Trustee Panagakos asked if there would be a marketing campaign, and Gama replied that there would be. Garcia-Ortiz then shared the 2026 customer service survey goals in the slide deck.

Programming Survey:
Garcia-Ortiz stated that these surveys would begin in April 2026 and continue throughout the year. He informed the Board that they would be provided with statistics in June and September of 2026 and again in January of 2027. Gama added that there would be QR codes at each location for guests to use, and in addition to the codes, there would be frequent marketing campaigns to encourage people to take the survey. Garcia-Ortiz then shared the programming survey percentage goals in the slide deck.

Trustee Yaneli Sanchez expressed the essential need to explain to the community what YVL plans to do with its data. It was agreed to include that information in the survey.

That concluded the topics of discussion. Trustee Liebrecht asked the management team if they had anything additional to share. The team discussed YVL's footprint, the quality of its buildings, and utilization.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Trustee Panagakos moved to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Yaneli Sanchez seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

President Liebrecht adjourned the meeting at 2:09 p.m.

Next Meeting will be
Regular Meeting
Monday, February 23, 2026, at 3:30 p.m.
Delta Dental Equity Hall Event Space (PNWU Campus)
200 University Parkway
Yakima, WA 98901

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Panagakos

Judith Panagakos
Secretary