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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

February 21, 2023

Senator Mark Schoesler
Washington State Senate
204 Irv Newhouse Building (PO Box 40409)
Olympia, WA 98504
mark.schoesler@leg.wa.gov

Dear Senator Schoesler,

The Whatcom County Council would like to express its support for the revised scope for the proposed Birch Bay Vogt Library (7968 Birch Bay Drive). While the WCLS's Board of Trustees was hopeful that the revision to the grant proposal would be well-received, the Washington State Department of Commerce declined a scope change request. The Whatcom County Council believes offering library services in Birch Bay is critical for the growing Birch Bay community. Currently the bookmobile visits Birch Bay four hours weekly, and a Library Express location would greatly expand access to library services.

For many years, the Whatcom County Library System (WCLS) had operated a WCLS bookmobile service to Birch Bay. The population of the Birch Bay community is rapidly growing, nearing 12,000, and access to the closest library branch in Blaine is more than five miles away with limited public transportation options (30-minute bus ride). In April 2017, WCLS purchased the Vogt property for a proposed full-service library to replace WCLS bookmobile service to Birch Bay.

In spring 2019, the WCLS received a \$2M state Library Capital Facilities grant to complete a \$6.5M renovation of the Vogt house into a 7,600 square foot full-service library branch. To reach the funding gap between the state grant and fundraising by the Friends of Birch Bay Library (FOBBL), the WCLS sought voter approval to create a Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area (LCFA). A supermajority of votes was required to pass the LCFA, and for the November 2020 election the measure failed by only 26 votes. The February 2022 special election results also failed by only a small margin.

After two failed ballot initiatives, the WCLS Board identified a revised scope for the project to be a Library Express, a smaller location with holds pickup, a small browsing collection, and improved parking. The plans, estimated to cost \$2.6M, include a first-floor renovation with full site improvements, additional parking spaces, a book return, signage, and an ADA accessible entrance.

The Whatcom County Council believes a Library Express would serve the Birch Bay community well, and we ask for your support for the revised scope for the Library Capital Facilities grant.

Sincerely,



Barry Buchanan
Whatcom County Council, Chair

Cc: Senator Mark Mullet, mark.mullet@leg.wa.gov
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