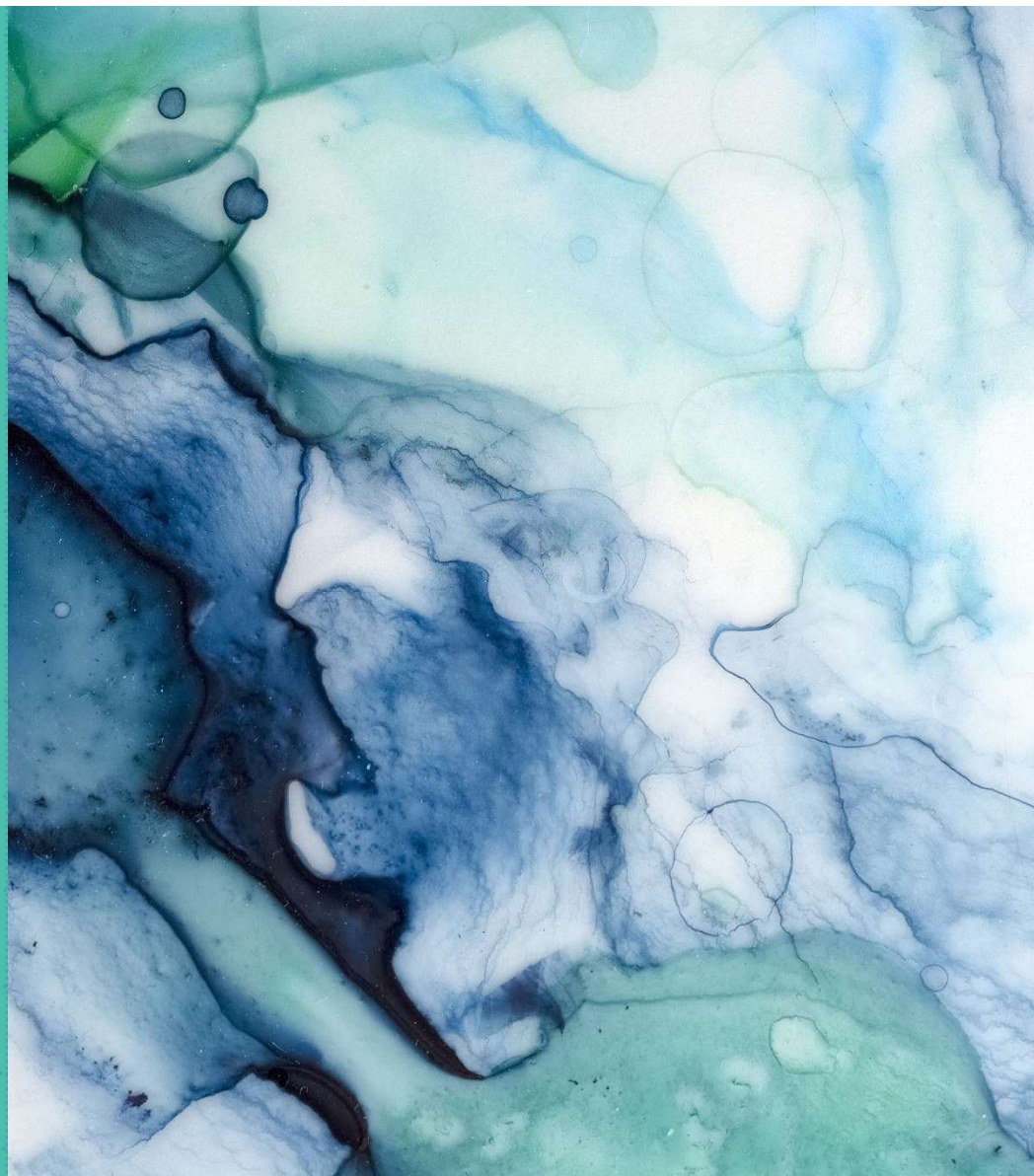


# WCLS Levy Lid Lift 2025 for BBIA



# Today's Agenda


- **Birch Bay Library Express Update**
- **WCLS Services**
- **Budget Review**
- **Levy Lid Lift Basics**
- **Incorporation and Library Service**

# Birch Bay Vogt Library Express Update

[www.wcls.org/birch-bay](http://www.wcls.org/birch-bay)

[BOOKS & MORE](#) [SERVICES](#) [EVENTS](#) [YOUTH](#) [GET INVOLVED](#) [ABOUT US](#)


## Birch Bay Vogt Library Express



*Courtesy of Osborn Architects Inc.*


### Birch Bay Vogt Library Project Update - March 20...

2024 – Osborn Architects, Inc. selected  
• Design development  
• Permit Pre-Application with W. County (June)  
• Community engagement (July)

Watch on  YouTube

**VIDEO March 2025:** Deputy Director, Michael Cox provides a brief overview of Birch Bay Vogt Library Express project from conception to what to expect in 2025.

[+ PREVIOUS NEWS ARTICLES](#)

 English

# Whatcom County Rural Library District

- **Independent junior taxing district**
- **Not part of Whatcom County government**
- **Separate from Bellingham Public Library**



Bellingham Public Library (BPL) is a separate system funded by taxpayers who live within the city limits of Bellingham. Its budget is approved by the Bellingham City Council as part of the city's overall annual budget. Unlike WCLS, which is an independent junior taxing district, BPL is a department of the City of Bellingham.

# 2024 in Review

**In 2024, over 59,000 cardholders checked out 2.1 million items (36 per cardholder).**

**If they had purchased those items themselves, they would have spent over \$42 million.**

**People made 552,420 visits to WCLS locations; 54,748 people attended 2,252 programs.**



# The Power of Sharing

**Physical Collection: books, DVDs, magazines...**

**Library of Things**

**Ebooks, eAudio, eMagazines (Libby)**

**Online resources: Consumer Reports, Ancestry.com, ValueLine, CreativeBug, local newspapers**



# Library Services

**Bookmobile**

**Homebound Services**

**Jail Service**

**Meeting Rooms**

**ConnectED for K12 students**



# Programs & Events

**Children's Storytimes & Summer Reading  
Pop-ups at Community Celebrations  
Teen Clubs  
Educational workshops & social events  
Book Groups**



# Cost of Services

**2025 Tax Revenue: \$10.1 million**

***Library collection:*** 670,000 physical and digital items to borrow

***Technology:*** computers, Internet, WiFi, printers

***Locations:*** 10 +1 on the way (Birch Bay) and a Bookmobile

***Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment, interior maintenance***

***Staff:*** 168 employees

***Public Services:*** research assistance, youth services, meeting rooms, programs and events, homebound delivery

***Support Services:*** HR and payroll, accounting, IT services, facilities, maintenance and fleet, community relations and marketing

**DOES NOT INCLUDE:** capital projects



# Cost for Average Household

- **\$600,000 Assessed Value of Property / 1,000 = 600**

**x \$0.26 levy rate = \$156 per year = \$13 per month**

**x \$0.42 levy rate = \$252 per year = \$21 per month (+\$8 per month)**

**\*\$0.50 levy rate is the max allowed by law.**


- ***A household with modest library use gets >\$1,200 per year in value.***

# Cost for Your Household

## Whatcom County Assessor & Treasurer - Property Search

Taxes and Assessment Details

Property Tax Information as of 01/30/2025

Amount Due if Paid on:   [Recalculate](#)

NOTE: If you plan to submit payment on a future date, make sure you enter the date and click RECALCULATE to obtain the correct total amount due.

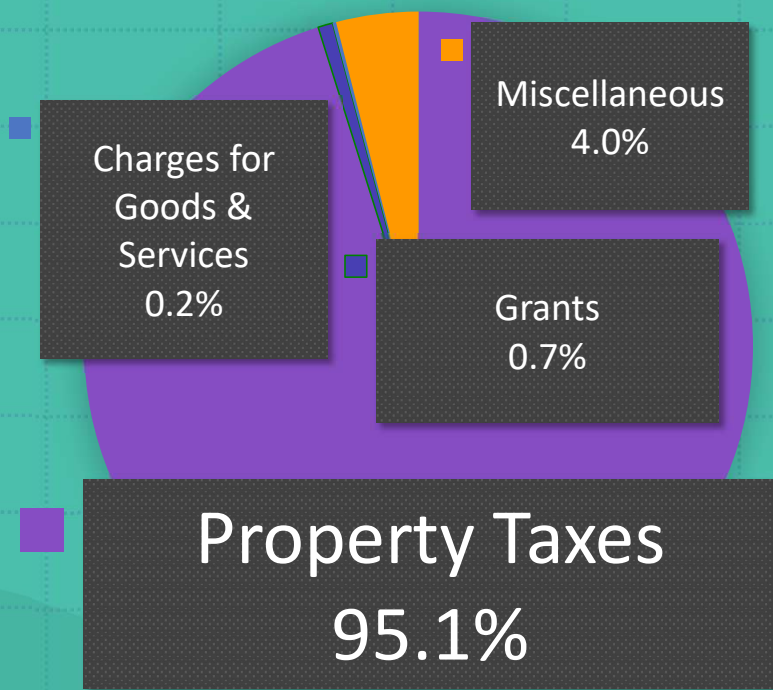
Click on "Statement Details" to expand or collapse a tax statement.

Year	Statement ID	First Half Base Amt.	Second Half Base Amt.	Penalty	Interest	Base Paid	Amount Due	
▼ Statement Details								
Year	Statement ID	Taxing Jurisdiction	First Half Base Amt.	Second Half Base Amt.	Penalty	Interest	Base Paid	Amount Due
2024	79450	ST - WASHINGTON STATE	\$544.31	\$544.29	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1088.60	\$0.00
2024	79450	WC - WHATCOM COUNTY	\$182.76	\$182.74	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$365.50	\$0.00
2024	79450	RD - COUNTY ROAD	\$189.49	\$189.48	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$378.97	\$0.00
2024	79450	FC - FLOOD CONTROL ZONE	\$26.97	\$26.96	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$53.93	\$0.00
2024	79450	CF - CONSERVATION FUTURES	\$5.82	\$5.81	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$11.63	\$0.00
2024	79450	FD021 - FIRE #21	\$193.04	\$193.04	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$386.08	\$0.00
2024	79450	RL - RURAL LIBRARY	\$65.04	\$65.03	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$130.07	\$0.00
2024	79450	PT - PORT OF BELLINGHAM	\$33.00	\$32.99	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$65.99	\$0.00
2024	79450	SD503 - BLAINE SCHOOL #503	\$410.89	\$410.88	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$821.77	\$0.00
2024	79450	WCMS - WHATCOM COUNTY EMS	\$55.86	\$55.85	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$111.71	\$0.00
2024	79450	WCD - WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5.00	\$0.00
2024	79450	WRMBB - BIRCH BAY WARM	\$52.26	\$52.26	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$104.52	\$0.00
2024	79450	<b>TOTAL:</b>	\$1761.94	\$1761.83	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3523.77	<b>\$0.00</b>
▶ Statement Details								
2023	79759		\$1807.50	\$1807.38	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3614.88	\$0.00
▶ Statement Details								
2022	80254		\$1834.55	\$1834.45	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3669.00	\$0.00
▶ Statement Details								
2021	80537		\$1746.42	\$1746.34	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3492.76	\$0.00

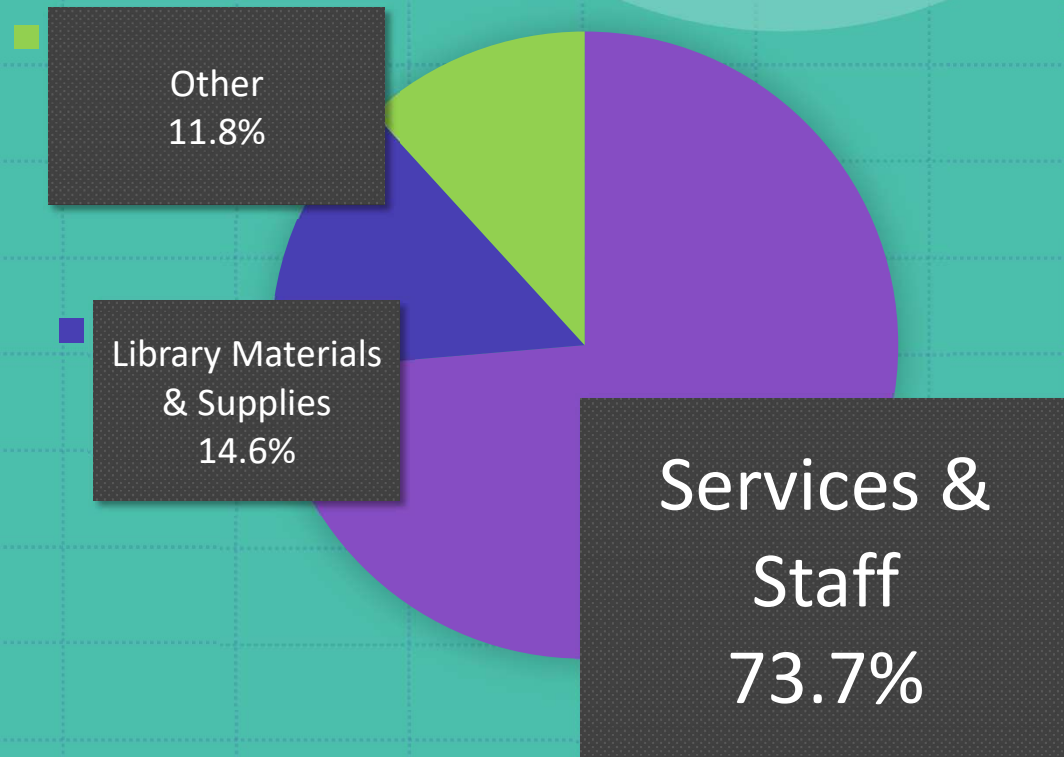
▶ Values

▶ Map List

## Revenue



## Expenditures



# Changes Over Time

	2008	2024	GROWTH
Library District Population	118,947	140,730	+18%
Annual Open Hours	19,279	23,614	+22%
Items Checked Out	1,441,375	2,114,479	+47%
Library Cardholders	39,624	61,993	+56%
Minimum Wage	\$8.55/hour	\$16.28/hour	+90%

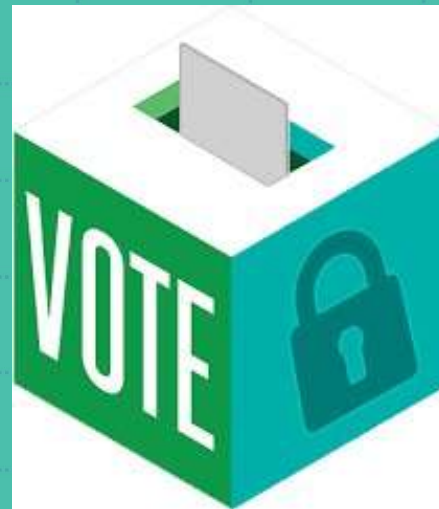
**Voters last approved a Levy Lid Lift in 2009 - to \$0.44 per \$1,000. Levy rate is now \$0.26 per \$1,000. Revenue is insufficient to sustain current open hours and level of service.**

# Budget Listening Sessions

- February – March 2025 held 11 listening sessions
- Gathered suggestions



**Decrease services**



**Increase revenue**

# Operating Budget Projections

- **WCLS has been operating at a deficit since 2023, depleting reserves**
- **Deficit is projected to top \$1.1 million in 2026 due to inflation and \$1.5 million in 2027**
- **Even if WCLS completely eliminated materials budget, will still need to cut open hours and services to balance the budget if additional revenue is not secured**
- **By 2028, WCLS will not have sufficient funds to cover cashflow**

# Use of Volunteers



**Volunteers provided  
10,279 hours of service  
to WCLS in 2024!**

**At \$16.28 / hour, that's  
a \$167,342 value!**

# Private Fundraising



**Friends of the Library groups**

# State or Federal Funding



**WASHINGTON**  

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**Secretary of State**

**Washington State Library**



# Ballot Language

## **WHATCOM COUNTY RURAL LIBRARY DISTRICT PROPOSITION NO. X LEVY LID LIFT**

The Board of Trustees of the Whatcom County Rural Library District adopted Resolution 3/18/25-04 concerning its regular property tax levy. This proposition would authorize the District to restore its regular property tax levy to \$0.42 per \$1,000 of assessed value for collection in 2026 to provide stable funding for the continued operation, maintenance and development of public libraries and library services in Whatcom County. The resulting dollar amount of the 2026 levy would be used for the purposes of computing subsequent levy limitations as provide by RCW 84.55. Should this proposition be approved?

YES..... ☐

NO..... ☐

# If the levy proposition passes

- Maintain current open hours and services
- Continue supporting a robust collection of current and relevant library materials, including physical and digital items, with reasonable wait times and online/streaming resources
- Protect community investment by addressing deferred maintenance and facilities needs
- Create seed money for library building projects (for matching grants)

## If the levy proposition fails

- Reduce investment in library materials, including physical and digital items, increasing wait times for popular items
- Cut staff, reduce open hours and eliminate some services, which may include closing branches one or two days a week
- Defer building maintenance and limit facilities repairs to emergencies
- Eliminate seed money for library building projects (unable to assist with matching grants)

# Incorporation

- Residents of unincorporated Birch Bay have been served by WCLS since its establishment in 1944
- However, if Birch Bay is incorporated, residents would no longer pay taxes to the library district and would not receive library services unless:
  - BBIA signs a pre-annexation agreement with WCLS to pay same amount to WCLS as property owners would have paid if they remained in the district OR
  - City residents vote to annex into the library district