



**Halifax Regional Library Board  
Meeting Minutes  
December 13, 2019  
Halifax Central Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Boardroom  
4:30-6:30pm**

**Present**

Cindy O'Driscoll, Board Chair  
Kim Brooks, Vice-Chair  
Marika Warren  
Alfred Burgesson  
Sharon Costey  
Lisa Blackburn  
Tim Outhit  
Tara Gault

**Staff**

Åsa Kachan, CEO & Chief Librarian  
Mairead Barry  
Terry Gallagher  
Debbie LeBel  
Kathleen Peverill  
Sara Gillis  
Alison Lucio

**1.0 Call to Order**

Cindy O'Driscoll called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Sharon Costey put forward a motion to approve the agenda as circulated. This motion was seconded by Lisa Blackburn.  
*Motion approved.*

**2.0 Minutes**

Kim Brooks put forward a motion to approve the minutes as presented. This motion was seconded by Alfred Burgesson.  
*Motion approved.*

**3.0 Chairs Report**

Cindy O'Driscoll spoke to the Board regarding the recent 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the J.D. Shatford Library. The Board Chair reported that the recent Lots to celebrate, JD Shatford, Central, etc.

## **4.0 Business Arising**

### **4.1 Chief Librarian and CEO Report**

Åsa Kachan reported to the Board that Councillor Hendsbee was very pleased to receive the letter regarding the participation from the HRLB regarding the proposed Eastern Shore Lifestyles Centre.

To accompany the restructuring of the branch districts, the CEO Branch Report is also being restructured to ensure that the Board receives the most pertinent and relevant information about activity in the branches. The new report structure should roll out within the next coming months.

### **4.2 Ebook Advocacy Update**

Åsa reported to the Board that the letter and suggested motion has not been sent to the mayor. Once the operational and capital budgets have been approved the letter will be sent, as the Board does not want the issue to be lost in the busy budget season.

### **4.3 Intellectual Freedom & Related Room Rental Policy**

The Board discussed Intellectual Freedom and how Halifax Public Libraries will be exploring the revision of the Room Rental Policy in light of a number of challenges that libraries have been facing with respect to renting and/or providing rooms to individuals and groups who have controversial platforms. Highlights of the discussion included:

- The library community is becoming more dramatic with respect to use of space and intellectual freedom challenges
- CFLA has weighed in, and provided a letter of support for Toronto Public Library when they allowed controversial speaker Meghan Murphy to rent a room at the public library despite many protesting the event.
- Concern that HPL shares is that as soon as you deny someone based on an established baseline, it opens up the possibility that others may challenge decisions that the library has deemed acceptable.
- We do not want to use more restrictive language than what is found in the legislation regarding hate speech.
- Some library systems have employed legal advice to help prepare their framework.
- The Board was asked to consider how much staff involvement should be involved in assessment and evaluation of room rentals and how much safety is included in the room rental – sense of personal safety, including words that could be triggering, etc.
- Management agreed that it would be difficult for staff to be in the room and make an assessment regarding content. To have staff in every potential private booking that is open to the public and assess content would be difficult and potentially problematic for many reasons.
- Management outlined what was done when HPL had a challenging room

rental. Police were alerted and there were staff available to work with anyone who had concerns. This works when it is known in advance that a rental is controversial.

- Where is the library's responsibility with civil liability if we have rented space to someone who ends up promoting hate speech? We would need to get a legal opinion.
- **Renting a room is not endorsing a program – it is providing space to the public.** On CFLA's side, they are recommending certain due diligence.
- It is a challenge that every event is unique as well. The public's general knowledge of hate speech is not well understood.
- Plan is going to be an outreach/targeted event at Central regarding gathering input and help build understanding. Caution is that there can be a very emotional response that may not align with the Charter of Rights & Freedoms. For something to be considered hate speech is actually a very high threshold.

For next steps, management will take this input and work on the draft and bring back to the Board for discussion and review.

#### **4.4 Budget Process Updates**

Åsa Kachan reported that the date for presentation to Council has been changed; HPL will now be presenting on Wednesday, January 22. The Library has been provided with our Operational budget envelope, including a \$1.19M adjustment to account for salary adjustments. Management reported that there was also an increase included to account for increased janitorial contracts that were negotiated without library involvement.

Federally, Minister Glavine spoke to increase of provincial grants – but the Library has yet to receive official correspondence. The Library are working on a provincial flat grant, with hope we may receive a slight increase.

The Library's capital funding is still not finalized. Cindy O'Driscoll and Marika Warren wrote to the mayor and then met with Mayor Mike Savage to explain the importance of library funding over the long term. The impetus to complete renovations at Keshen Goodman was discussed as well. The Keshen Goodman supplementary report for \$2M in funding was prepared and the funding request is in the 'parking lot' at Council for further discussion – perhaps altogether with Operational requests. Åsa Kachan thanked the Councillor Board members for their support.

#### **4.5 LBANS Update**

Meeting minutes for the previous LBANS meeting was included in the Board package. A further LBANS discussion is planned for the January meeting.

## **5.0 Board Committee Reports**

### **5.1 Board Planning & Performance Committee**

Committee Chair Kim Brooks reported that the Planning & Performance Committee has been busy in preparing a draft governance manual. At the last Committee meeting, the Strategic Plan Updates were provided. Cindy O’Driscoll thanked the Committee for their continued work.

### **5.2 Finance & Audit Committee**

#### **5.2.1 Terms of Reference**

Committee Chair Marika Warren spoke to the Terms of Reference for the Finance & Audit Committee that was included in the package. Board members agreed that the additions strengthened and clarified the work of the Committee. Lisa Blackburn put forth the following motion:

***Motion:***

*THAT the Halifax Regional Library Board approve the Terms of Reference for the Finance & Audit Committee of the Board as presented.*

This motion was seconded by Kim Brooks.

*Approved.*

#### **5.2.2 Financial Update**

Committee Chair Marika Warren spoke to the Board regarding the financial update that was included in the package and reported that the Finance & Audit Committee did not identify any concerns with the financials as presented.

Committee Chair Warren reported that the requested staff report on the community non-board committee members was completed. This report will go to the Planning & Performance Committee for review.

## **6.0 Motion to Move-In-Camera**

Marika Warren put forth a motion for the Board to move into an incamera session for the purposes of discussing:

6.1 SWP Update

6.2 Branch Lease Discussion

This motion was seconded by Kim Brooks.

*Motion approved.*

## **7.0 Adjournment**

With no further agenda items, Cindy O’Driscoll put forth a motion to adjourn the meeting.

*Motion approved.*