



## Halifax Regional Library Board Meeting Minutes

**Videoconference – via GoToMeeting**

Thursday, April 16, 2020 – 4:30-6:00pm

### 1.0 Call to Order

Board Chair Cindy O’Driscoll called the meeting to order.

### 2.0 Minutes of March 5, 2020

Kim Brooks put forth a motion to approve the minutes of March 5 as circulated. This motion was seconded by Marika Warren.

*Motion approved.*

### 3.0 Chair’s Report

Cindy O’Driscoll offered thanks and appreciation to the Library staff for providing services to the community during the unprecedented pandemic. Reflecting on the past two weeks, the community was reminded that the library is the glue that helps to connect the community. Cindy O’Driscoll thanked Åsa Kachan for her leadership in this challenging time with ever-evolving circumstances. The Board Chair reported that there has been regular communication happening, including comprehensive updates. Cindy O’Driscoll also expressed the Board’s appreciation to senior staff who are leading the work of keeping the operations moving, including oversight of staff, finances, projects, and planning for how the library will re-open and establishing the ‘new normal’.

#### Annual Meeting

The Board Executive discussed the Annual Meeting scheduled for June 2020. As the covid-19 impacts and public health directives are evolving quickly, the Board Executive decided to bring this issue to the full Board for discussion. As the audit (cooperatively completed in partnership with HRM) will be delayed by a number of weeks, the Audited Financial Statements will not be ready for approval until late summer, perhaps into the fall – pushing out the date of the Annual Meeting.

The Annual Report is underdevelopment and will be presented to the Board. The timeline will be adjusted to align with the receipt of the audited financial statements. The organization reported that if the Annual Meeting is to be held virtually, it will be interesting and some fun can still be incorporated.

In addition, the Board Retreat is postponed. As we begin to advance to our ‘new normal’, the Board will re-assess and hold the Retreat in an adjusted fashion.

## 4.0 Business Arising

### 4.1 Chief Librarian & CEO Report

#### Covid-19 Response Update

Åsa Kachan reported to the Board that the past weeks have been challenging, but the Library's response has been a testament to the amazing team in place; it has been a remarkable experience to have staff in action and all of our teams have been exceptional. The IT staff have responded exceptionally well with setting up staff with offsite access.

Åsa Kachan reported that the response to public services has been exceptional as well. The organization increased spending to ebooks to help meet the substantial increase in demand. In addition, the streaming service Kanopy was added, and offsite public access to ancestry.com and PressReader was provided. Our social media presence has been increased and teams are busy creating interesting and relevant content.

Food programming continues with online cooking sessions and programming. Teams have been connecting with families, teens, adults, and youth and online programming for newcomers and communities at risk are taking place.

Activity and snack kits are being provided and distributed through community partners. In addition, there are the myriad of 'surprise' support such as providing wifi kits to shelters, food harvested from the Lou Duggan studio grower and provided to a community shelter. Overall, there has been an incredible amount of work done in a short period of time to help support the community during the challenging time of the beginning weeks of the global pandemic.

Åsa Kachan reported that today was a difficult day as temporary and term staff were laid off to help meet the adjusted budget target provided by HRM. Mairead Barry has been coordinating much of the work of the Strategic Workforce Plan Steering Committee and looking to make sure we move forward with care. Today 33 temporary positions were ended, and an additional 54 staff were in term positions that will be returning to their original position. This is heart wrenching time for the staff and the managers having these conversations. A general memo was sent to all staff today outlining the process.

There are teams working to assess what the future may look like as considerations will need to be made with respect to the physical space, programming, and mix of our collections going forward. Åsa Kachan reported that she is sitting on a national Think Tank group to think about some standards and looking to create a 'manual' for Libraries going forward regarding these considerations. These are interesting – yet terrible times and libraries will be innovative and pivot through the pandemic in an interesting way.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been somewhat difficult to source; it is hoped that if required, the province and municipality will assist with sourcing. Within the coming weeks we will know more.

Through Erica Fleck (HRM EMO), the organization has access to an Epidemiologist who provided advice regarding the virus and how best to consider planning with regards to the collection; we have been looking at the possibility of circulating the print collection in a very specific way. The Library has received some good advice from the province regarding how to best safeguard the safety of staff, the public, and the collection. In addition, management will work with the JOSH (Joint Occupational Health and Safety) as well.

The team is contacting current Borrow by Mail clients as well and the team is exploring expanding this service. The Teen Services team is reaching out specifically to their youth groups and providing activity packs and library materials. The teen services team is doing online activities such as food preparation and learning how to cook for their families. This action on part of the staff is significant as we know that we are helping to prevent emerging mental health issues for youth and reinforcing the idea the future will be okay.

Åsa Kachan provided an overview of what is happening with libraries on a national level. Some systems have laid off substantial portions of their staff, and others haven't. All systems are struggling with the appropriate response to an unprecedented time.

As the organization is aware of the significant challenges, there has been an increased effort to remind staff about the Employee Assistance Program; Homewood is the current EAP provider. It is difficult for the impacted staff; both the staff laid off and the staff remaining doing the work as staff are becoming weary. Our managers have done an amazing job of being in contact with their staff and reaching out. It has been encouraging that the organization has received lovely feedback from our staff – they are grateful for the support and overall – are very understanding of the current situation.

Board member and Deputy Mayor Lisa Blackburn thanked management and reiterated 'what the Library has been able to do in the past four weeks is truly become an essential service for our community.'

In the midst of all of this, the organization received notification from Agriculture Canada that we have money to build a Community Kitchen at our Spryfield Library. It will be a nice enhancement to this branch.

## **5.0 Board Committee Reports (Standing Items)**

### **5.1 Board Planning & Performance Committee** (no update as Committee did not meet.)

The Board Manual continues to be developed and the Committee will report back at a future meeting.

## **5.2 Finance & Audit Committee**

### Financial Update

Marika Warren reported that a lot has happened and shifted with respect to the 2020/21 Operating budget and 2019-20 Year-end forecast since the Committee met only a couple of weeks ago. The team will be working to re-adjust the 2020-19 budget based on new targets from HRM.

The Finance & Audit Committee reported that both the budget and forecast were reviewed and was pleased to report that the organization was set to come in close to budget.

Marika Warren reported that the Committee discussed the addition of Risk Management to the Committee's oversight responsibilities. This will be an ongoing discussion at the Committee level as there will be a number of increased risks identified with the pandemic. To date a number of staffing risks related to the covid-19 response has been handled successfully due to the excellent collaboration with the Union.

Åsa Kachan reported that HRM has indicated that a number of capital projects will be continuing during this time. There are a number of projects identified that may be smaller in scope but have large impact. There is also an understanding that larger projects would likely experience supply chain issues and therefore would be difficult to complete within budget. This time of State of Emergency could be utilized as an opportunity for crews to access buildings to take advantage of the empty spaces. Åsa Kachan thanked Terry Gallager, Manager of Facilities and Finances for his continued identification and oversight for these projects happening in the branches such as the deep cleaning of Central floors.

## **5.3 Board Awards**

Lisa Blackburn, Chair of the Board Awards Committee spoke to the suggestion that was put forth that a Board Award be named after former staff member Ms. Amyoony. A newspaper article was circulated as part of the Board package that spoke to Ms. Amyoony's incredible and substantial contribution to the Library; both as an incredible mentor and leader to staff and the community.

Through the Board Executive Committee, Lisa Blackburn put forth the motion,

***THAT to recognize the substantial and lasting impact that former Library staff member Ms. Amyoony made to the community and employees of Halifax Public Libraries, the Halifax Regional Library Board renames the Staff Innovation and Impact Award the "Ms. Amyoony Award of Staff Innovation & Impact".***

This motion was seconded by Marika Warren.  
*Motion approved.*

Board Awards Committee Chair Lisa Blackburn encouraged any Board member interested in serving on the Selection Committee to contact Alison Lucio. The commitment is a couple of emails and one selection meeting. The Board Awards are very well appreciated by staff and a considerable amount of effort is made towards submitting applications.

#### **5.4 LBANS Update**

Board Chair Cindy O’Driscoll informed the Board that the letter to LBANS informing them of our change in membership status was well received by LBANS Chair Alex Morrison. Conversations will continue with LBANS regarding how best Halifax Public Libraries can contribute.

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

Kim Brooks put forth a motion for the Halifax Regional Library Board to move into an in camera session for the purposes of discussing:

##### **6.1 Staffing Update**

This motion was seconded by Marika Warren.  
*Motion approved.*

#### **7.0 Adjournment**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

***Next meeting date: Thursday, May 28, 2020, 4:30-7:00pm - Videoconference***