



# Halifax Regional Library Board

## Meeting Minutes

December 11, 2020  
Zoom, 4:30-7:30pm

### **Board Members in Attendance:**

Cindy O’Driscoll, Board Chair  
Kim Brooks, Board Vice-Chair  
Marika Warren  
Alfred Burgesson  
Sharon Costey  
Linda MacKay  
Emily Miller  
Tim Outhit  
Heather Rose  
Tony Mancini

### **Staff:**

Åsa Kachan, Chief Librarian & CEO  
Terry Gallagher, Senior Manager Finance & Facilities  
Debbie LeBel, Senior Manager Access  
Karen Dahl, Senior Manager Programming & Community Engagement  
Sara Gillis, Senior Manager People & Culture  
Alison Lucio, Executive Assistant

### **1.0 Call to order / Approval of Agenda / Approval of Minutes of October 29, 2020**

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

Sharon Costey put forward a motion to approve the agenda as circulated. This was seconded by Marika Warren.

*Motion approved.*

### **Approval of Minutes of October 29, 2020**

Linda MacKay put forward a motion to approve the minutes of October 29, 2020 as circulated. This motion was seconded by Heather Rose.

*Motion approved.*

### **2.0 Chair’s Report**

Board Chair Cindy O’Driscoll welcomed newly appointed Board member, Councillor Tony Mancini. Ms. O’Driscoll announced that Tony will be joining the Planning & Performance Committee and Councillor Tim Outhit will be serving on the Finance

Committee. The Board members took an opportunity to share some personal updates and connect during this necessary online meeting format.

Cindy shared with the Board that both she and Senior Manager of Strategy, Mairead Barry, attended the ICD course on Governance Essentials. This is normally a two-day program that has been adjusted to be held over four days online through Zoom. The content was really interesting; talking about subjects such as role of board, board chair, duties as directors, and acting in good faith in terms of serving the organization. Conflict of interest and perceived conflict of interest was also discussed. Ms. O’Driscoll shared with the Board that the content was useful, and provided a level of confidence that the Library Board is implementing many best practices.

Cindy O’Driscoll informed the Board that she and CEO Åsa Kachan recently presented an introductory orientation session to the new HRM Councillors. The Board is thankful for the opportunity, as this was the first time that the Library has participated in this orientation process.

### **3.0 CEO’s Report**

Chief Librarian & CEO, Åsa Kachan, provided an update to the Board regarding a number of issues at Halifax Public Libraries. Highlights included:

- The organization has incredible staff that has provided exceptional service through the pandemic. The Library has been re-closed for approximately two weeks and the staff have responded in a manner nothing short of amazing. Curb-side pickup and additional services available from the first closure were immediately available to the community. The Library expanded to provide photocopying, printing, distribution of menstrual products, snacks, etc. while the building spaces were closed to the public. Our staff have remained in the space and worked in a safe manner. The Library is VERY open – even though our physical spaces are closed to the public. The Library has received a lovely stream of feedback from the community, including a lovely call from the Mayor.
- Normally this is the time of year the Library celebrates our long-term staff, and in previous years tonight would normally be our Long Term Service Awards ceremony followed by our all-staff Holiday celebration at Central Library. This year we’ve pivoted to in-person Zoom events and celebrating one another apart – but together.
- The Library continues to move forward on providing food and social equity to our communities. There are a number of grants and other funding opportunities being explored to assist with funding these important initiatives.
- Management has meeting with the Union Executive a number of times over the last couple of weeks. The meetings have been very productive, and the organization is pleased about the direction of the conversations.

- As CULC Vice Chair, Åsa reported that she met with Julie Bebb of Library and Archives Canada. The group spoke to the response the libraries have had to COVID-19. The group discussed long-term sustainability, diversity & inclusion efforts, supporting democracy, and where libraries could sit with respect to the climate response.
- Åsa reported that she is participating on HRM's Emergency Management Committee with all BU Directors. These important conversations are regarding asset management and being part of community emergency. Erica Fleck conducted a survey that found that libraries and rec centres are at the 'top of the list' to keep open during emergencies.
- CULC met earlier this week. Some diversity & inclusion training is happening at the provincial level, and CULC is exploring implementing some similar training. Earlier conversations are happening with a goal to have all provincial boards receive this training.
- Chanae Parsons was recently hired into the organization as a Community Manager in the Eastern District. The organization is excited to have some of these early positions of the new structure filled.
- The organization continues to work with HRM regarding the preparation of the 2020/21 budget. A number of adjustments and conversations have needed to happen as the Library's budget (as many others) were adjusted through covid and with a return to services, the budget needs to be re-examined. The Board will continue to receive updates, with an expectation that the budget will be brought forward at the January meeting.
- The Library is working closely with HRM, including Public Safety officer Amy Siciliano, in returning some services to the public space – such as outdoor washrooms and water access.

#### **4.0 Moving toward social and racial equity**

Åsa Kachan and Cindy O'Driscoll welcomed Sara Gillis, Senior Manager People & Culture, and Sarah Weaver, Adult Collection Development Librarian.

Sarah Weaver introduced the Board Book Club, after introducing herself and speaking about her work with Collections. The Board will be divided into two groups and will be discussing the following books:

- 21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act, Bob Joseph
- White Fragility, Robin Diangelo
- The Skin We're In, Desmond Cole
- Almost Feral, Gemma Hickey
- Invisible Women, Caroline Criado Perez

The books will be distributed before the holiday break, and timing of the discussions will be discussed at the January meeting. A possible timeline may be discussions held in mid-February, mid-March, and at the April Board meeting.

Sara Gillis provided an update on the recent Diversity & Inclusion survey that was conducted. The Library worked with CCDI to administer the survey, and the survey ran for three weeks, closing November 26. CCDI had previously informed us that a 50% completion rate is considered good, and a 70% completion rate is considered amazing – the Library had a completion rate of approximately 75%. The organization will be able to run various reports ourselves regarding the data. CCDI will also take the information collected and analyze, and will provide an insight report.

Cindy O’Driscoll thanked both Sarah Weaver and Sara Gillis for their reports and insights. Board members shared their excitement for the books and future discussions with board colleagues.

## **5.0 Committee Reports**

### **5.1 Board Executive**

Board Chair Cindy O’Driscoll spoke to the recent mini-retreat the Board held to discuss Risk. Cindy thanked those who completed the retreat feedback survey.

The Board discussed how risk oversight is currently assigned to the Finance & Audit Committee, but after consideration, the Board may decide to divide out oversight of some specific risk areas to a different Committee or group. The Board agreed that the next steps will be for Management to generate a draft Risk Registry using the framework and then this work will come back to the Board for discussion and review.

As the Board Retreat was broken into two online sessions, the Board will be scheduling a session to discuss the Strategic Plan. There will be some pre-work in advance so the Board will already have some information, and perhaps some homework to do in advance of the session. SSHRC has identified future challenge areas, and the Sustainable Development Goals/Sustainable cities information the UN are useful foundational documents.

### **5.2 Finance & Audit**

The compliance report and financial update was included in the meeting package. The Board commended the high financial process compliance rate of the organization. The Board discussed the Visa compliance report; any non-compliance is reported through a notation in the table, including the associated action and dollar amount. Any systemic issues are identified through this process. Local travel has been very low due to the pandemic. The Board acknowledged the HST claim reporting, including no concerns being identified by the auditor.

The Board thanked Management for the report, and agreed that compliance reports will be provided to the Board on a quarterly basis.

The Board discussed the financial update that was included in the meeting package. The slight budget surplus was reallocated by Management into areas of greatest need such as additional ebooks and building improvements. Finance & Audit Committee Chair, Marika Warren informed the Board that in their review of the organization's finances, identified trends continue and no concerns have been identified.

### **5.3 Planning & Performance**

Kim Brooks, Committee Chair, provided an update to the Board. The Committee continues to working on the on the Board Manual. The process being followed is that a draft manual was prepared by Kim and Cindy, and then the P&P Committee reviews each section and Management edits and makes adjustments. The Board is welcome to provide feedback on the material at any time.

Kim reported that the Committee is anticipating the next section may take some time as the material needs to be thoroughly considered.

### **In-Camera Session**

Tim Outhit put forth a motion for the Halifax Regional Library Board move to an in-camera session for the purposes to discuss:

- 6.0 Leases
- 7.0 SWP

This motion was seconded by Linda MacKay.

*Motion approved.*

### **8.0 Other Business**

There was no further business.

### **9.0 Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned after the in-camera session.