



**Halifax Regional Library Board
Meeting Minutes
Zoom (Videoconference)
December 15, 2022**

Present

Kim Brooks
Marika Warren
Emily Miller
Heather Rose
Linda MacKay
Tony Mancini
Kathryn Morse
Chi Harris
Erin Wynn
Christian Browne

Staff Present

Åsa Kachan
Mairead Barry
Megan Gainer
Alison Lucio

1.0 Call to Order / Approval of Agenda

Board Chair Kim Brooks called the meeting to order.

Erin Wynn put forward a motion to approve the agenda as circulated. This motion was seconded by Linda MacKay.

Motion approved.

Approval of Minutes

Marika Warren put forward a motion to approve the minutes as circulated. This motion was seconded by Heather Rose.

Motion approved.

2.0 Chair's Report

Board Chair Kim Brooks welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3.0 Chief Librarian & CEO Report

Chief Librarian & CEO Åsa Kachan provided an update to the Board. Highlights included:

- Library Board appointments are in process, with interviews being held. Councillor Kathryn Morse and Councillor Tony Mancini have both been re-appointed to the Board.
- HRM Public Safety Advisor Amy Siciliano attended a recent meeting of the Senior Excellence Team to seek feedback on the Public Safety Strategy that is currently in development. The library team provided some salient feedback, based on the experiences of library staff, the ways in which the Library contributes toward public safety in a measurable way.
- Councillor Tony Mancini shared that we have learned that we (the community) need to continue to have more public spaces – like the Library – that are safe for everyone. Councillor Mancini stressed the importance of leveraging what we have in HRM assets.
- HRM has started the budgeting process.
- The branches continue to see increased visitor numbers. We have hired three Play Facilitators using some of the Covid recovery funds received from Council last year, who are working to develop less formalized, and less structured learning opportunities in branches.
- Programming and events are increasing in numbers. People are coming together to talk about some heavier issues, but also balancing that with lighter, more fun things to do – together. FIFA World Cup watch parties in branches were successful in bringing people together to participate and have fun. Overall, the branches are full of good, positive energy.
- In late November, Halifax Public Libraries hosted the CULC and PLL meetings (Canadian Urban Libraries Council) and (Public Library Leaders). The PLL participants are those who are mid-career with further leadership aspirations. During this visit, Åsa reported that she taught a financial course for the group.
- The CULC CEO group were very appreciative of seeing Halifax spaces and how some of our positions exist and are structured. There was wide interest in how HPL has fully integrated the Security team into the Library team, rather than having security provided by a third-party. The group was also interested in learning and hearing more about the Community Navigator position based out of Central Library. HPL is truly leading in this respect.
- Check-in and feedback meetings are being scheduled with the branch Managers and Leads regarding the new organizational structure. With the SWP implementation, we are checking-in to see what is working and what could be improved.
- Sara Gillis, Director of People & Culture has retired. The organization is sad to see her go, Sara has had a rich history with the Library. As we congratulate Sara on her retirement, we have hired an incoming Director of People & Culture, Ashley Lorette. Ashley is coming to the Library from NSCAD. We look forward to working the diverse experience she will bring.

4.0 Capital Updates

Åsa Kachan and Megan Gainer provided the Board with an update on the Keshen Goodman renovation. Staff seem happy about how the work is progressing. During the time the branch will be closed to the public, we are planning for the WiFi to continue to be provided as well as curbside, or other limited services, depending on site safety.

Councillor Kathryn Morse shared that as the area Councillor, they have not heard much concerns from people, and renovations seem to be operating very well with current work-arounds. If the Library will be going through a shut-down, there may be some concerns from the community – currently the Library is looking at 8-16 weeks for a closure. Pop-up library programming will happen during the closure.

5.0 Board Committee Reports

5.1 Board Executive

The Library Board Executive Committee did not meet.

5.2 Finance, Audit & Risk

Committee Chair Linda MacKay provided a Financial Overview to the Board. The Finance, Audit & Risk Committee met on December 2. Shannon Robilliard provided a financial update and an update on Restricted Funds. The Committee is projecting a balanced position at by year-end.

Budget time is beginning at HRM. The Library is given an envelope to build the operating budget to. We will be indicating where costs are increasing, and contract costs are increasing.

Earlier this week HRM requested that the Library look at opportunities to further cut costs to support HRM's efforts to build a budget to a 4% tax increase, rather than the 8% originally requested. Management understands that this year's budget is expected to be tight. The Library was provided with a funding envelope that is smaller than the previous year, so it will be difficult to cut costs further

Åsa Kachan shared that it is important for the Board to understand that the Library's budget is not growing at the same rate as some other HRM departments. This conversation will continue as budgeting progresses with the municipality. The Library has done an excellent job with process efficiencies and reallocation of funds internal to the budget to continue to achieve excellent results. However, it remains an ongoing concern that the Library's collection is not meeting community need or national benchmarks.

Åsa shared that it is an interesting time in our history of libraries – public libraries are taking on more and more roles in response to community need but are not receiving additional funding to reflect those roles. There is high community strain, as people are dealing with inflation, precarious housing, and other pressures. This places a burden on the public library and there is some fatigue at the staff level. This challenge is felt across the county.

The Library is involved in an upcoming national research project together with the Canadian Urban Institute– *Library Dividend* – looking how libraries positively impact urban life and change the nature of our cities in the context of urban life. This could be helpful in building the case for library funding

At the provincial level, Library CEOs are beginning discussions with the Province about the library funding formula. Currently HPL receives approximately \$5 Million annually in operating funding from the Province. The amount has been unchanged for four years.

Capital Update

Management has been working on the Capital budget for the last few months. At the beginning of the process, staff were quite involved, however they were left out of the final decisions. Library management was informed that in the final review of the draft Capital Budget, several library projects were cut. These cuts impact the Halifax North, Bedford, and Alderney Gate projects.

5.3 Planning & Performance

5.3.1 Conflict of Interest – Governance

The draft Governance Conflict of Interest was previously provided to the Board, and included in the meeting package for consideration for approval.

Marika Warren put forward the following motion:

THAT the Halifax Regional Library Board approve the Governance Conflict of Interest as provided.

This motion was seconded by Kim Brooks.

Motion approved.

5.3.2 Ethical Conduct & Conflict of Interest Policy

The draft Ethical Conduct & Conflict of Interest Policy was previously provided to the Board, and included in the meeting package for consideration for approval.

Marika Warren put forward the following motion:

THAT the Halifax Regional Library Board approve the (Organizational Policy) Ethical Conduct & Conflict of Interest Policy as circulated.

This motion was seconded by Erin Wynn.

Through discussion, the Board recommended that references to the Board be removed from the Contest Ineligibility portion of the document.

The Board agreed with these friendly amendments.

Motion approved.

5.3.3 Skills Matrix Results

The results from the most recent Skills Matrix was provided in the Board package for information. There were no questions from the Board.

6.0 In-Camera Session

At this time, Kim Brooks put forward a motion to move to an in-camera session. This motion was seconded by Marika Warren.

Motion approved.

7.0 Adjournment

Kim Brooks put forward a motion to adjourn the meeting. Emily Miller seconded this motion.

Motion approved.