



Halifax Regional Library Board

Meeting – Minutes

Halifax Central Library
Thursday, March 12, 2026
4:30-6:00pm

Present

Mary-Ann Rowlston (Chair)
Killian McParland
Sue Murtagh
Jan Jensen
Laura White

Regrets

Laura Godsoe
Tony Mancini
Christian Browne

Staff Present

Åsa Kachan
Kathleen Morris
Ken Williment
Kevin Crick
Kaya Fraser
Alison Lucio
Megan Gainer
Dave MacNeil

1.0 Call to Order

Mary-Ann Rowlston, Vice-Chair called the meeting to order. As Ayo Aladejebi was not in attendance for the meeting, the Vice-Chair presided over the meeting.

Approval of Agenda & Minutes

Jan Jensen put forward a motion to approve the agenda as circulated.

This motion was seconded by Killian McParland.

Motion approved.

Laura White put forward a motion to approve the minutes for the previous meeting as included in the meeting package.

This motion was seconded by Jan Jensen.

Motion approved.

2.0 Chair's Report

Mary-Ann Rowston spoke to the Board regarding the impact of public libraries. She acknowledged International Women's Day, and spoke to the various related programs and activities held at the Library. She thanked Library staff for all they do, and spoke to the impact of the public library with respect to inclusion and gender parity.

3.0 Social Impact of Libraries Study

Managers Darla Muzzerall and Laurel Taylor provided a presentation and spoke to the recent Halifax Public Libraries Social Impact Study of Libraries that was conducted.

Chief Librarian & CEO Åsa Kachan spoke about the national report which is a collaboration between a range of public library systems across the country that participated in the study. This study, both the local and the national, represents a great value for cost, and tells the story and impact of public libraries in a new way. Because the national report had a larger data set, additional information focused on specific demographics is included.

The national report can be found here:

<https://culc.ca/project/social-impact-study/>

The Board thanked Management for the presentation. This plan will be used in conversations with funders, potential donors, and others as we speak to the impact of libraries.

4.3 Programming Strategy & Framework Update

Kaya Fraser, Manager of Program Design, presented an overview of the Programming Strategy and Framework to the Board.

Key highlights included:

- Programming is a high-impact, core library service, particularly in social outcomes.
- The scope is significant, with approximately 10,000 programs delivered annually.
- Programming is complex and multi-modal, requiring improved clarity in roles and monitoring.

Proposed Programming Framework:

The proposed framework has been designed as a living document to guide program design, development, and delivery, and introduces four program types:

1. Core
2. Local
3. Feature
4. Spotlight

There is an emphasis to improved role clarity across the organization. The framework aligns program outcomes with Strategic Plan pillars, and introduces an Outcomes-Based Design Template (“7 Simple Questions”) to assist library staff.

As this is rolled out across the organization, there will be a launch of a Program Design Dashboard (developed in-house) to:

- support idea generation,
- avoid duplication,
- identify service gaps, and
- enhance reporting.

5.0 Board Committee Reports

5.1 Board Executive Committee

The Board Executive Committee did not meet between meetings.

5.2 Finance Audit & Risk Committee

Finance, Audit & Risk Committee Chair Mary-Ann Rowston provided an update to the full Board. The Library’s financial status remains consistent with prior reporting. Vacancy management continues to be a key factor (as previously reported). Overspend in the equipment line relates to lease fit-up for the combined services facility, and is offset by underspend in lease rental costs within the same project.

There were no other significant variances or concerns identified.

5.3 Planning & Performance Committee

Committee Chair Sue Murtagh reported that the Committee did not meet between Board meetings.

6.0 CEO Update

Åsa Kachan provided an update to the Board. Highlights included:

- It has been a busy programming period with strong community engagement.

- Notable events included:
 - Kate Quinn & Janie Chang author event at Central Library
 - Lift Every Voice music showcases
 - Youth Quiz Finals (longstanding African Heritage Month highlight)
- Interim service has been restored at Dartmouth North in the Community Centre General Purpose Room while flood remediation continues within the Dartmouth North Library space.
- The Olympic viewing partnership with CBC, including community events was very successful.
- The CEO reported that she hosted roundtable with incoming CBC President and other community leaders here at the Library.

Staff Development & Initiatives:

- Staff participated in Intellectual Freedom Train-the-Trainer program that was provided through Jim Turk and the Centre for Free Expression.
- A small team of staff have registered in Science of Reading (ULC) course. This will support the development of the Library's Early Literacy Strategy.

Community & Infrastructure Updates:

- Expansion of community Wi-Fi continues (Beechville, Musquodoboit Valley, Upper Musquodoboit, Cole Harbour/Westphal, St. Andrews). Åsa recognized Kevin Crick's leadership in this initiative.
- Åsa will be attending CULC meetings in Calgary in April.
- Managers Shannon McAllister and Randolph will also be in attendance as they are participating in the CULC Public Library Leaders program.

7.0 In Camera Session

Sue Murtagh put forward a motion to move to an in-camera session in order to discuss the following:

- Budget Update
- Lease Update
- Non-union compensation

This motion was seconded by Jan Jensen.

Motion approved.

8.0 Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.