

Whitby Public Library Board Minutes

Date: Apr 16, 2025

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Board Room, Central Library

Present:

Lorraine Gray (Chair)

Liam Nichols

Kate Campbell

Art Maki

Geoff Anderson

Maria McDonnell

Peter Creer

Akhil Kapoor

Chris Leahy (Virtual)

Regrets:

none

Also Present:

Rhonda Jessup, CEO

Joel Sutherland, Director, Community and Service Development

Michelle Frenette, Director, Corporate Services

Christy Harper, Director, Technology and Operations

Mandy Beaton, Finance and Administration Associate

1. Call to Order/Approval of Agenda

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was declared.

3. Presentation: Advancing Public Library Leadership – Samidha Kalia, Manager, Reference

Samidha Kalia shared with the Board her experience taking part in a two-year certificate program (2023-2025 cohort) offered by the Ontario Library Service called Advancing Public Library Leadership (APLL). This program was designed to expand and advance leadership capacity of public library managers and CEOs. It uses a practice-based learning model and includes two in person intensives and two online sessions.

The program included the following targeted competencies: owning your leadership practices and development, understanding the dynamics of change management, succeeding in a municipal environment and strategic communications and advocacy. Highlights experienced were a wholistic understanding of governance, a network of peers and media relations and communications.

Samidha completed projects on the following topics: data strategy and centralized data hub, succession planning and transition planning, policy and grant writing, workplans and annual goals for the WPL's reference department. She explained that she acquired many new skills from the program and her related projects including: strategic planning and data analysis, decision-making and coaching skills, project management skills and the ability to collaborate with other libraries.

4. Consent Agenda Items

Moved by Akhil Kapoor

Seconded by Liam Nichols

That the Consent Agenda items be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

5. Chief Executive Officer's Report

WPL is now offering new community passes for Reptilia, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Abilities Centre. This is in addition to the Town of Whitby swim/skate, Parkwood Estate and Ontario Parks passes that WPL already offers. These passes are very popular with patrons and are also a great opportunity for newcomers to Durham region.

News surrounding U.S. tariffs continues to change daily. Currently, books are included on the list of retaliatory tariffs imposed by the Canadian government. If this goes through, it will have a profound impact on our purchasing power since we do purchase books from the U.S. The Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) as well as other organizations are advocating that cultural goods should not be subject to tariffs.

WPL is currently undergoing a management reorganization, which will be in place in June. This is a result of an upcoming staff parental leave as well as other staff changes. There will be a reorganization of the structure and assigned duties of management at WPL. Rhonda communicated the details of these changes to all staff via email recently. This is expected to be a positive change for the organization as it will help us adapt to the community's changing needs.

Administration staff are continuing their work on an organizational readiness plan which includes identifying existing gaps at WPL.

Board members expressed that they are enjoying the new structure of the CEO written reports. They also reiterated that the community passes offered by WPL have a positive impact as they are very popular with patrons. Community members promote these passes as well, which is positive for the Library.

6. Councillor's Report

The Town is working on its response to the U.S. tariffs by revising its purchasing procedures to focus more on Canadian suppliers, wherever possible. Both the Town and the Region of Durham are looking for ways to strengthen Canadian procurement, as well as trying to break down inter-provincial trade barriers.

There has been observed a current decline in development in the local economy.

The "big pour" is about to happen for the new Whitby Sports Complex, which has a target date of November for opening to the public.

7. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

a) Board Practices (A. Maki)

Art Maki provided an update to the Board on this topic. The Board committee working group met earlier this evening to discuss the current HR and planning committees and whether they should be eliminated or consolidated. When looking at terms of reference, a difference was noted between them and the current Board practices. When benchmarking was performed, it was found that WPL Board is not out of line with other similar Boards.

A gap was identified by this working group in the area of advocacy work (both regional and provincial) being carried out by Board members. The group will address this issue and make recommendations on it at either the upcoming May or June Board meetings, after they meet again to discuss and finalize.

8. New Business

a) Information Services Policy

Moved by Peter Creer

Seconded by Maria McDonnell

That the Information Services Policy be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

b) Board By-laws

Rhonda summarized changes made to the Board by-laws. There have been some material changes made, due to samples that were reviewed by Rhonda. It was noted that 30 days notice is required for any amendments, therefore these changes will not be approved until the May Board meeting.

Section 1.1 – it was clarified that the wording of this statement comes from other libraries as well as our previous by-laws under section 1.3 and it is standard wording. Discussion occurred around the meaning of the purpose of the Board vs. the purpose of this document itself. It is to be clarified by the Board what specific wording they would like to have in this section, with the suggestion of using language directly from the Library's strategic plan. As it is the Board's role is to oversee, more generic wording is requested for this section of the by-laws.

Section 2.2 – specifies the role the Board can play in making appointments. Rhonda will make changes to the wording here, in reference to the Public Library's Act.

Section 3.2 – clarification was requested regarding the Board Chair being allowed to serve for 4 consecutive years.

Section 4.3 – currently lists a minimum of 9 Board meetings required per year, while the Libraries Act lists a minimum of 7. A change can be made here, which is up to the Board's discretion and can be decided on every year in January.

Regarding virtual participation in Board meetings, now that we are in post-pandemic times, it has been observed that virtual participation does work and that it increases accessibility. This section of the by-laws has been updated to allow for virtual participation in Board meetings, outside of only being in extraordinary cases.

For ad hoc standing committees, the question was raised whether there should be more freedom allowed for the Board around this. The wording of this section is to be revisited.

Additionally, the rules around the Board's authority to delegate are to be listed more clearly.

A motion item was removed from the by-laws due to it being covered by Robert's Rules of Order.

The Board thanked Rhonda and her team for their work in reviewing these by-laws and proposing changes to them.

c) CEO Succession

At the January meeting, the Board brought up having a CEO succession policy in place, as this was identified as being a gap in the past.

Rhonda is obligated to ensure that she has a list of 2 people who could step into her role in her absence, both internal and external candidates. Rhonda examined both the Vancouver and Regina Public Library's CEO succession policies for comparison.

Lorraine and Rhonda will discuss one-on-one the application of this document being brought forward.

In the event of a CEO absence at WPL, the Board would likely hire a search firm and would provide this list of recommendations from Rhonda to them.

d) Advocacy Update

Liam, Lorraine and Rhonda met recently to discuss Board advocacy. Buckslip pamphlets were passed out at this meeting to the Board members. These have been prepared by WPL's communications department and they provide key messages and talking points from WPL staff (specifically Rhonda Jessup, Joel Sutherland and Karen Horsman) for the Board members to use when meeting with Town councillors and others on the topic of advocacy for the Library. They provide a summary of what is important about the Library and what needs to be communicated to Town council members ahead of the upcoming budget process in the fall.

Board members noted that they appreciated the points on the buckslips which addressed the topics of isolation and affordability as they were well in tune with the community's current needs.

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 21, 2025, at 7:00 p.m., in the Board Room, Central Library, 405 Dundas Street West, Whitby

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m. on a motion by Peter Creer.

Board Chair

Secretary