

Whitby Public Library Board Minutes

Date: Nov 19, 2025

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Board Room, Central Library

Present:

Lorraine Gray (Chair)

Liam Nichols

Geoff Anderson

Peter Creer

Kate Campbell

Art Maki

Akhil Kapoor

Maria McDonnell

Chris Leahy (joined virtually 7:36pm until 7:43pm)

Regrets:

none

Also Present:

Rhonda Jessup, Chief Executive Officer

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 7:04 p.m.

Moved by Geoff Anderson

Seconded by Akhil Kapoor

That the Agenda be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was declared.

3. Consent Agenda Items

Moved by Kate Campbell

Seconded by Maria McDonnell

That the Consent Agenda items be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

4. Chief Executive Officer's Report (R. Jessup)

Rhonda introduced Suzanne McNeil, a reference assistant who has been with WPL for 20 years, as an observer at tonight's Board meeting as a CUPE Local 53 Union representative.

There were 28 applications received for the upcoming Board vacancy. This was noted to be an incredible number, considering that there is a shorter than normal recruitment period. The applicants have a wide variety of expertise and were processed through a scoring matrix by a small Board Committee. Town Council will recommend a candidate for this position at their December meeting.

The National Indigenous Veterans Day ceremony held on Nov. 8th in Celebration Square and inside the Library went well. There were approximately 100 people in attendance. It was a good learning opportunity regarding the history of Indigenous Veterans in Canada and how they have not been properly recognized in the past for their contributions to the war efforts.

We applied for 3 Public Library Service Awards but none of our submissions were short-listed. We are still incredibly proud of the hard work that staff have completed this past year and the positive impact they have on the community every day.

The admin team held three staff budget meetings during this past week at all WPL locations after the Mayor's budget memo was released on Nov. 7th. These were well received by staff, who demonstrated a high level of engagement in this budget process.

Current Board Chair Lorraine Gray, who is stepping down at the end of December, was thanked for her dedication to the Board over the past seven years. An interview between WPL's Communications Manager and Lorraine titled "A passionate advocate steps down as Board Chair, leaving behind an inspiring legacy" was shared with the Board members.

5. Councillor's Report (C. Leahy)

Councillor Leahy shared that last night's Town budget meeting went well. The Library was well represented by staff and CUPE union representatives, and there has been pushback from the community regarding the cuts to the Library's grant. He is hopeful that this will result in a positive change to the Library's operating grant, though nothing is certain yet at this stage of the process. He also advised that he is meeting with CUPE Local 53 this week.

The Board thanked the Councillor for his support and advocacy on behalf of WPL.

It was noted that it would be helpful to have some Board members attend the November 27th budget meeting.

6. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

a. 2026 Draft Operating Budget (motion)

Thanks to Liam and Lorraine's advocacy work, the Mayor recommended changing the grant reduction from 5% to 3%.

Global TV Durham interviewed both Rhonda Jessup and Mayor Roy on this topic recently. This was our first time going through the process of a Strong Mayor's budget. It is recognized that affordability is currently a big issue in the local community.

At the Town's public budget meeting last night, there were 15 delegations, which was the largest amount in years. This included Sarah Ferencz, CUPE Local 53.04 Vice-President. The library was supported by numerous delegates, including by New York Times bestselling author Susanna Kearsley, who advocated against cuts to the Library grant.

There is no change yet since the Mayor's budget memo at this point, however the process is not yet finished. Community members shared that they would rather have cuts made elsewhere rather than to the library's grant, which was gratifying to hear.

CUPE has also started up an email campaign against these cuts and the WPL Board email has received approximately 490 of these emailed petitions so far, which is a tremendous response rate.

Mayor Roy posted a message on Instagram, acknowledging that Whitby residents do not want to see cuts made to the library. People view the library as very tangible asset, which is at the centre of the community. The staff's customer service at WPL keep people coming back.

It was noted that there could be proposed amendments to the budget brought forward at next week's Council meeting.

It was suggested that the Board's approval of WPL's 2026 Draft Operating Budget be deferred until January, after final decisions have been made by Council.

Lorraine will discuss with Mayor Roy that the Board does not endorse cuts to the Library's operating grant. The Board would be much more comfortable at a 0% change from 2025, especially given the recent display of community support for the library at the Town meeting and through the email campaign.

Moved by Akhil Kapoor
Seconded by Peter Creer

That the 2026 Draft Operating Budget be approved as presented.

DEFEATED

Moved by Liam Nichols
Seconded by Geoff Anderson

That the Board's approval of the 2026 Draft Operating Budget be deferred to the January Board meeting.

CARRIED

The Town's budget amendment meeting is on November 27th, Councillor Leahy will present his amendments at that time. Liam and Kate will attend on behalf of the Board.

7. New Business

a) OLS Board Assembly Meeting (verbal report)

Maria attended this virtual meeting on November 12th. Topics discussed included conflicts of interest and VOLT. Maria will forward this information to the other Board members via Rhonda and Mandy.

OLS is also updating their strategic plan. There are currently elections taking place for the 2026 OLS Board members, people are encouraged to step forward for this.

The round table included a discussion on challenges with the relationships between Town Council and Library Boards. Maria noted that in comparison, we are fortunate on this Board.

The group also talked about Strong Mayor's powers with budgets and issues around Board member recruitment.

It was noted that 39 municipalities are part of this group that represent communities with populations of 75,000 or more, but only but only eight of these municipalities attended the meeting. The Board thanked Maria for attending.

b) CEO Evaluation (discussion)

A Board Committee was struck for this purpose back in September. This was comprised of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Art, Kate and Peter. Michelle and Rhonda will work with the members of this committee to ensure they complete the CEO's evaluation for 2025. Liam will set up a meeting for this CEO Evaluation Committee.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., in the Board Room, Central Library, 405 Dundas Street West, Whitby

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m. on a motion by Art Maki.

Board Chair

Secretary