

Whitby Public Library Board Minutes

Date: Sept. 16, 2026

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Board Room, Central Library

Present:

Liam Nichols (Chair)
Art Maki
Kate Campbell
Geoff Anderson
Maria McDonnell
Annette Cianchino
Akhil Kapoor (virtual)

Regrets:

Peter Creer
Niki Lundquist

Also Present:

Rhonda Jessup, Chief Executive Officer
Michelle Frenette, Director, Corporate Services
Joel Sutherland, Director, Community and Service Development
Mandy Beaton, Finance and Administration Associate

1. Call to Order/Approval of Agenda

Meeting was called to order at 7:23 p.m.

Moved by Maria McDonnell

Seconded by Kate Campbell

That the Agenda be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was declared.

3. Presentation: Karen Horsman, Manager, Communications, Fall 2026 Campaign

Karen Horsman, Manager of Communications presented to the Board WPL's current "Small Card. Big Savings" fall campaign. This is a 7-week advocacy campaign which

emphasizes an affordability narrative for our patrons. WPL's Library Value Calculator, VOLT (Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit) data as well as campaign design synergy was highlighted in the presentation.

The communications department will be narrating 15 different stories throughout the upcoming 7 weeks to our core audience which includes municipal candidates, by way of our various platforms.

The Board members expressed that the campaign's photos used were well done and attention grabbing. The economic benefit of the library was briefly discussed.

4. Consent Agenda Items

Moved by Kate Campbell

Seconded by Art Maki

That the Consent Agenda items be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

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

The CBC Kids Reads event on September 12 was incredible. Over 2,100 patrons visited the Central Library within a 4-hour period to attend the event. It was noted that CBC's previous largest turnout for this annual event was 500, at Vaughan Public Library. Patrons appreciate free, family-friendly community activities. WPL staff worked very hard at this remarkable event, and the CBC crew was also amazing to work with and were very engaging with the children. It was noted that our library was chosen to host this event, out of the Durham Region libraries due to our beautiful building, as well as CBC's positive initial meeting with Rachel Hill.

Our first Meet the Candidates events took place at the Brooklin Branch and Central Library, with approximately 35 attendees at each. Liam Nichols noted good engagement between the attendees and the municipal candidates. Buck slips promoting these Meet the Candidate events were handed out to Board members.

The large painting located in Central's lobby over the bench was generously donated to WPL by the artist, Robert McAfee. It has an estimated worth of \$114K and looks beautiful in the lobby. We are planning to get a photo with Robert as well as send a thank you message to him from the Board. Stipulations for our ownership of the painting are that it does not end up in a private collection in the future, but rather that it remains in a public institution. It has been added to our asset base for insurance purposes.

WPL's new Director of Technology and Operations, Muhammad Rafeh will be beginning his role in October. We are excited to welcome him onboard as he takes over this large portfolio, which he has valuable experience in.

Rhonda encouraged the Board members to visit the newly opened Fieldgate Sports Complex in Brooklin, which was beautifully designed by the same architects that designed WPL's Central Library and BCCL.

Our Fundraising/Donations category surpassing the budgeted amount for 2026 at 157% by the end of the summer was briefly discussed as being due to WPL's very successful inaugural book sale on June 13.

Some circulation statistics from the Q2 report were clarified, specifically regarding Hoopla changes.

The possibility of WPL adding vinyl records to its collection was brought up, which will be researched by Jessica Bellows, our new Collection Development Specialist.

6. Councillor's Report (N. Lundquist)

Deferred to next meeting.

7. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

a. Board Advocacy

Rhonda provided a timeline for Board and advisory committee recruitment. December 11 is the deadline for Board member applications. Current Board members are required to reapply in order to serve another term. Council appointments to boards and advisory committees is tentatively scheduled for January 7 and the current Board will remain in place until that date. The third Wednesday of January will be the first Board meeting with the newly appointed Board.

The information packages about WPL that were sent out to municipal candidates were well received.

8. New Business

a. Board Self-Evaluation

Thank you to the Board members for their time and effort to complete these evaluations. Areas of opportunity were highlighted by Rhonda for the Board members to review. We currently have a mature Board which received a very good overall evaluation. Action items such as training were outlined for the next Board.

Liam noted for future consideration that the Board's relationship with the community was an area for improvement. Another topic to be mindful of is addressing the challenge of possible group think taking place.

b. Board Legacy Document

This document will be handed over to the new Board. It lists the Board's challenges, opportunities, successes and more. Our communications department will work on fine-tuning this promotional item. Board members are asked to please let Rhonda know if they would like any further changes made to this document.

It was noted that staff did well in capturing the themes that this Board has focused on during this term. A suggestion was also made to further highlight on this document which topics future Board members may be required to address such as social services, intellectual freedom and more.

Moved by Kate Campbell

Seconded by Annette Cianchino

That the Board Legacy Document be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

c. 2027 Budget

There is not a great deal of information currently available on the 2027 budget. The capital budget deadline was extended to September 25th. The operating budget deadline is October 30th and we are awaiting instruction from the Town Finance on this. Due to the upcoming election, some timelines have been pushed back.

Senior Leadership Team meetings will continue to be held in November. December is tentatively scheduled for WPL to make a budget presentation to Council. In mid-January the Strong Mayor's budget will go out. Public budget meetings will take place in February and March, after which time the budget will be adopted in March.

d. Solve the Crisis (L. Nichols)

A meeting of Ontario municipalities which included Ontario's big city mayors was held. The goal is to secure resources to help address the current homelessness, addictions and mental health crisis.

This Board has communicated its support of this initiative in the past. However, due to our ongoing need for help in this area, it is suggested that we echo our call for support on this campaign.

Moved by Geoff Anderson

Seconded by Akhil Kapoor

That the Board write a letter to reiterate our support for the Solve the Crisis Campaign.

CARRIED

9. Next Meeting

Wednesday, October 21, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Board Room, Central Library, 405 Dundas Street West, Whitby

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm, on a motion by Maria McDonnell.

Board Chair

Secretary