

Whitby Public Library Board Minutes

Date: April 19, 2023

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Board Room, Central Library

Present:

Geoff Anderson
Victoria Bozinovski
Peter Creer
Akhil Kapoor
Maria McDonnell
Liam Nichols
Mitu Verpal

Regrets:

Lorraine Gray
Art Maki

Also Present:

Rhonda Jessup, CEO
Donna Bolton-Steele, Director, Community and Service Development
Michelle Frenette, Director, Corporate Services
Christy Harper, Director, Technology and Operations

1. Call to Order/Approval of Agenda

Moved by Peter Creer

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. Guest Speaker: Jake Farr, President, PFLAG Durham

Jake presented an overview of the services offered by PFLAG Durham. He discussed the differences between sexuality, sex, and gender and talked about the related phobias. He also spoke of ways to make the 2SLGBTQIA community feel welcome by

providing true allyship and how to show visibility all year long rather than just during Pride Month or with a sticker in the window. He provided some history and background on the art of drag entertainment, explaining the differences between a drag show and a Drag Queen Storytime. He also emphasized the importance of libraries showing leadership by hosting events like Drag Queen Storytime in the community. He explained that PFLAG Durham is planning to start posting positive information on their social media channels about the upcoming Drag Queen Storytimes being hosted by Durham Libraries to help counter the expected negative attacks.

4. Consent Agenda Items

Moved by Akhil Kapoor

Seconded by Mitu Verpal

That the Consent Agenda items be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

5. Chief Executive Officer's Report

Rhonda Jessup reported that the Library had a very successful Eid Storytime with 120 attendees. She thanked Pat Khashmanian for all of her hard work leading up to, and during, the recent audit. She advised that Donna Bolton-Steele will represent the Library at an upcoming Town Community Strategy Plan session. Four staff health and safety discussion forums were recently held as an opportunity for Central Library staff to voice concerns and ask questions about the rise in incidents at the Central Library over the past several months. The information was then collated and grouped into themes by Christy Harper, and the questions and answers were shared with staff. This is a living document which will continue to be updated. Rhonda provided an update on the warming centre at 117 King St and the work done by the Town and the Region, including returning it to a 10-bed facility. It continues to be an ever-evolving situation and the nicer weather has resulted in less incidents lately. It is expected that it may be seasonally cyclical, but planning will be done for this fall so we are more prepared this year. She did remind the group that there were incidents in the library prior to the warming centre opening as well.

6. Councillor's Report

Councillor Bozinovski reviewed her submitted report, including Council's recent unanimous vote to call on the Provincial Government to urgently acknowledge that homelessness in Ontario is a social, economic and health crisis. The Town is preparing a Public Art Policy and would like to understand community vision for the future of public art in Whitby. The community is encouraged to submit feedback at

connectwhitby.ca. She also reminded the Board of the upcoming Mayor's Fireside Chat hosted by the Whitby Chamber of Commerce which is being held on April 25th.

7. Business Arising from Minutes

a) Library Board Bylaws

These items were discussed at the February 2023 meeting to meet the 30 days' notice of any amendments as per Section 9.1 of the bylaws. They were brought forward as a motion this evening.

Two changes were recommended to the Board bylaws. The first, regarding Section 2.1 Number of Members, recommended that section 2.1 of the bylaw be updated to revert to the original composition of nine members. The second updated Section 8.4 Signing Authority to reflect new titles. It is not a change in signing authority.

Moved by Peter Creer

Seconded by Liam Nichols

That the two recommended revisions be made to the Board bylaws.
CARRIED.

b) Board Dinner

Board members were reminded that the Annual Board Dinner will be held on Wednesday, May 24 at 6:30 p.m. at Bella Notte Ristorante. Each Board member may bring one guest. The group was reminded to RSVP and to provide the name of their guest to Michelle Frenette by May 8.

8. New Business

a) Library Materials Vendor Selection

Rhonda explained that there have been many ongoing difficulties with Library Services Centre, the main vendor of our materials. Despite meetings with them over the past year, no improvements have been made. Christy prepared a Request for Proposal for proponents to bid on supplying the Library with our materials. Rhonda, Christy and Michelle then evaluated, scored and ranked the proposals received. The recommendations proposed to the Board were based on those evaluation results.

Moved by Akhil Kapoor

Seconded by Liam Nichols

That the Board approve staff's recommendations regarding library materials vendors.
CARRIED

b) 2024-2028 Strategic Plan

There was some general discussion regarding the 2024-2028 strategic plan. The group felt that the vision and mission of the 2019-2023 plan still resonates today and that the upcoming plan should be more of an update to the present plan rather than a completely new plan, especially considering that the pandemic may have resulted in some lost time of the plan's lifespan. It was felt that the community consultation is also a good opportunity to test some ideas with those groups. Rhonda explained that Peter Spratt, a local facilitator who had assisted in the previous plan, was available to work with the group again to help with the process. She also explained that the 2019-2023 plan was a big change from the previous one. It was recommended that the Planning Committee meet to discuss further.

c) Drag Queen Storytime Statement

Rhonda provided an overview of the history of Drag Queen Storytime at the Library as well as expressed concern at some of the negative comments staff had to deal with last year. She reminded the group that although the protestors were vocal, they are a minority and that we had 175 attendees at last year's event.

During last year's protests of the storytimes, the Durham Libraries took a region-wide approach, including a supporting statement signed by all the Library CEOs. Rhonda spoke of plans for the same type of approach this year as well as providing more support for staff to deal with the complaints, including talking points. It was further recommended that the Library Board Chairs of each library also sign the statement of support this year.

Moved by Liam Nichols
Seconded by Peter Creer

That the Board Chair sign the Drag Queen Storytime statement of support on behalf of the Whitby Public Library Board.

CARRIED

d) Committee Meetings

Geoff Anderson spoke of the importance of the work of the Board's two committees and recommended that they set initial meetings to discuss workplans for 2023 before the May meeting. Akhil Kapoor offered to reach out to the HR Committee members, while Liam Nichols will coordinate the same with the Planning Committee.

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., in the Board Room, Central Library.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m. on a motion by Victoria Bozinovski.

Board Chair

Secretary