

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES MEETING FOR  
KITCHENER PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

COMMENCEMENT

The meeting commenced with a Land Acknowledgement given by Clare Wagner.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Board Meeting of the Kitchener Public Library Board was called to order at 7:02 p.m. on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, by the Chair, Katherine Andrews, in the Administration Boardroom at the Central Library.

TRUSTEES PRESENT

Katherine Andrews; Laura Blythe; Bonita Hansra (remote); Councillor Margaret Johnston; Margaret Lam; Anjali Misra; Shannon Nicholson; Brandon Van Dam; Clare Wagner (remote).

Mary Chevreau, Secretary-Treasurer and Chief Executive Officer.

STAFF PRESENT

Penny-Lynn Fielding; Gloria Grigas; Lorie Lee.

REGRETS

Dan Deeth; Councillor Christine Michaud; Angela Riddell.

SPECIAL GUEST (remote)

James Turk, Director, Centre for Free Expression.

NOTE: The Library Board met at the Central Library. The Library Tour and Presentation of the Country Hills Community Library, as noted on the Agenda, was postponed to a future date due to unforeseen circumstances.

The Chair moved forward with the Agenda until the guest speaker, James Turk, joined the meeting at 7:30 pm.

2. AGENDA REVIEW

23-27... On motion by Laura Blythe and seconded by Anjali Misra, it was RESOLVED that the Agenda be adopted.

CARRIED

There were no pecuniary / conflict of interest declarations.

3. MINUTES of the Board Meeting of April 19, 2023

23-28... On motion by Brandon Van Dam and seconded by Clare Wagner, it was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Library Board Meeting of April 19, 2023, be approved.

CARRIED

4. BUSINESS ARISING

Documented for the Minutes, the Online Board Resolution #23-25 was approved by the Library Board on May 2, 2023, as follows:

23-25... On motion by Katherine Andrews and seconded by Clare Wagner, it was RESOLVED that the Chief Executive Officer, Mary Chevreau, has capacity and authority to enter and execute the Contribution Agreement with GICB for the Southwest Community Library project by Resolution of the Kitchener Public Library Board of Trustees as at May 2, 2023.

CARRIED

5. 1. BUSINESS

REPORT OF OFFICERS

(a) Report of the Chair

The Chair reminded the Trustees that the June 21 Library Board meeting will be hosted at the Pioneer Park Community Library.

Look for an upcoming invitation to attend an announcement by the Ministry to be made in-person at the Central Library on Wednesday, May 24 at 10:00 am.

Ontario Library Service (OLS) Meeting Update

Brandon Van Dam attended the Ontario Library Services's virtual meeting on April 20. Kitchener Public Library is one of the library assemblies that serve over 30,000 people.

A Round Table format was used during the 3-hour meeting.

As noted by Brandon Van Dam, challenges amongst these libraries were similar, regardless of their size. Some of the topics of discussion included book banning; meeting room policies; strategic planning and controversial children's programs.

OLS has partnered with CAMH to offer a session of Managing Mental Health in the Workplace for Leaders.

By signing up for a LearnHQ.ca account, Board members have access to OLS's Training website which offers a variety of on-demand courses for professional development.

Brandon Van Dam agreed that it would be worthwhile for the Library Board to continue to attend the OLS meetings and volunteered to do so.

The Library Board was in favour of Brandon Van Dam continuing to represent the KPL Board at OLS meetings. Katherine Andrews thanked Brandon Van Dam for his update and for agreeing to attend future OLS meetings.

(b) Finance Committee

No updates were noted by the Chair, Shannon Nicholson.

(c) Facilities Planning & Building Committee

Southwest Community Library Update

Clare Wagner, Chair of the Facilities Planning & Building Committee, was pleased to report that she will be joining Katherine Andrews and KPL staff to share the design enhancements and updates for the Southwest Community Library with the Six Nations of the Grand River in Ohsweken.

(d) Public Service & Policy Committee

No updates were noted by Brandon Van Dam, Chair of the Public Service & Policy Committee.

[Councillor Margaret Johnston joined the meeting.]

(e) Report of the Secretary-Treasurer and CEO

Updates

Mary Chevreau, Penny-Lynn Fielding and Lorie Lee attended a meeting with the Waterloo Region Catholic District School Board to discuss their request for information of specific materials in the collection at the shared St. Mary's Country Hills Community Library.

As noted by the CEO, the conversation was a positive one and further updates will follow as they become available.

It was strongly recommended at a recent meeting with the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) that all libraries review their operational policies. The CEO confirmed that KPL's operational policies are being reviewed and updated by staff, if required. Governance policies will be reviewed and updated by the Library Board's Public Service & Policy Committee.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was also discussed at the CULC meeting and its growing concern for libraries.

Mary Chevreau and Penny-Lynn Fielding have met with the Mayor and Chief of Police regarding KPL's accelerated concern in dealing with the aggressive and threatening behavior of some customers.

The Mayor is very supportive and the Chief of Police is sympathetic regarding incidents encountered with the vulnerable community that uses our library spaces. A recommendation of what to say when calling 911 was discussed which was then shared at KPL's meeting with People in Charge (PIC's). As to whether KPL can be listed as a "congregate" setting will be confirmed.

Fortunately the number of incidents at KPL have subsided as the weather improved. Lots of families are using the space and the number of users has increased to pre-COVID levels.

In-Camera Session

None

6. II. NEW BUSINESS

None.

7. PRESENTATION with James Turk, Director, Centre for Free Expression

James Turk from the Centre for Free Expression joined the Library Board meeting virtually to chat about book and programming challenges, freedom of expression, hate speech and censorship.

As noted by James Turk, libraries have seen an explosion in both the number and nature of challenges in the last 6 months. Attempts to remove specific books in New Brunswick included customers/groups using protests; social media; petitions; embarrassing School Board officials and Library Boards and asking Council to defund the library. This was one of many examples quoted.

Freedom of expression and intellectual freedom were explained and why they are essential.

It is important that the Library Board be proactive by:

- a) Building a shared understanding of intellectual freedom
- b) Ensuring that library policies are clear and unambiguous
- c) Supporting the CEO and Administrative staff who have to deal with library challenges
- d) Being proud champions of their Library
- e) Knowing that welcoming and inclusivity does not exclude the library from challenges.

In the event of a challenge, the library must turn to its policies. Ensure staff understand their role when receiving a complaint and ensure the customer fills out the library's form to document their concern.

CEO's can turn to fellow CEO's and public officials for help. Refer to the databases available through the Centre for Free Expression's website and do not hesitate to reach out to James Turk ([jim@jamesturk.com](mailto:jim@jamesturk.com)) for assistance.

On behalf of the Library Board, Mary Chevreau thanked James Turk for his presentation on this fascinating topic of discussion.

The Public Service & Policy Committee will move forward with its governance policy review. James Turk referenced the *Public Library Policies Database* listed on their website that have been updated and shared by Canadian Libraries.

8. III. PRESENTATIONS

(a) Report of Councillors

As noted by Councillor Margaret Johnston, the Library Board needs to be confident and comfortable in knowing that Kitchener Council is very supportive of the library and any occurrence to ban library books or change its leadership would not be supported.

City Council is currently dealing compassionately with a number of social issues.

The Cityscape is changing rapidly with lots of big development.

9. ADJOURNMENT

23-29... There being no further business, on motion by Margaret Lam and seconded by Brandon Van Dam, it was RESOLVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

CARRIED

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Chair

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Secretary-Treasurer

[Attachments Accompanying May 17, 2023 Board Meeting]

- (a) April 19, 2023 Library Board Minutes
- (b)