



A Regular Meeting of
the Richmond Hill Public Library Board
will be held in the Boardroom of Central Library
on Thursday, January 19, 2023 at 4:00pm

AGENDA

1.0 Call to Order

2.0 Regrets

3.0 Adoption of Agenda

3.1 Opening Remarks Board Chair

3.2 Adoption of Agenda

4.0 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

5.0 Delegations

6.0 Minutes

6.1 Library Board Minutes – December 5, 2022

7.0 Presentations

8.0 Reports

8.1 Board Committees Report SRLIB23.01

8.2 Commitment to Intellectual Freedom Report SRLIB23.02

9.0 New Business

9.1 New Motions

9.1.1 Appoint OLS Board Assembly Representative

9.2 Correspondence

9.2.1 Board Press Release

9.2.2 Article from Municipal World January 2023

The relationship between public library boards and municipalities

9.2.3 Article from Municipal World January 2023

New councils must review, ask questions, listen, decide

9.3 Member Announcements

10.0 Resolution to Move Into Closed Session to consider matters relating to:

10.1 Labour relations or employee negotiations

11.0 Resolution to Reconvene in Open Session

12.0 Adoption of Recommendations Arising from Closed Session (if any)

13.0 Date of Next Meetings

The next Regular Meeting of the Library Board will be held on:

Thursday, February 16, 2023 @ 4:00 p.m. at Oak Ridges Library to be followed by library tour.

14.0 Adjournment

Please advise Darren Solomon and Susan Quinn of regrets for attendance, by noon of the day of the meeting at e-mail: dsolomon@rhpl.ca and squinn@rhpl.ca

The Richmond Hill Public Library Board

Monday, December 5, 2022

MINUTES

The Richmond Hill Public Library Board held a regular meeting on Monday, December 5, 2022 in the Boardroom at Central Library, 1 Atkinson Street, Richmond Hill, Ontario.

Present: Stephen Chait, Chair
Jason Cherniak
Councillor Carol Davidson
Councillor Castro Liu
Sofia Ma
Sadra Nasser
Sugantha Raj, Vice Chair
Mona Shahnarazi
Councillor Scott Thompson

Staff: Darren Solomon, Chief Executive Officer
Joshua Dyer, Director, Content & Strategy Delivery
Robin Fribance, Director, Experience & Strategy
Yunmi Hwang, Director, Branch Services
Andrew Li, Financial Management Advisor CFS, City of Richmond Hill
Mirza Mehdi, Manager, Digital Products
Susan Quinn, Administrative Coordinator

1.0 Call to Order

The CEO called the meeting to order at 4:24 p.m.

2.0 Regrets

None

3.0 New Board Term – November 2022 to October 2026

3.1 Election of Chair and Vice Chair / CEO

The CEO acted as the meeting Chair for the election of Chair and Vice Chair.

Motion:

22:43

Moved by:

Councillor S. Thompson

Seconded by:

J. Cherniak

THAT the Richmond Hill Public Library Board nominates Stephen Chait to the position of Chair.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Motion:

22:44

Moved by:

S. Chait

Seconded by:

S. Nasser

THAT the Richmond Hill Public Library Board nominates Sugantha Raj to the position of Vice Chair.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Stephen Chait assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

4.0 Adoption of Agenda

Motion:

22:45

Moved by:

S. Nasser

Seconded by:

Councillor S. Thompson

THAT the Agenda of December 5, 2022 be adopted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5.0 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest.

6.0 Minutes

6.1 Library Board Minutes – September 27, 2022

Motion:

22:46

Moved by:

S. Raj

Seconded by:

S. Nasser

THAT the Minutes of September 27, 2022 be adopted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7.0 Presentations

7.1 Board Orientation

Darren Solomon, CEO

Joshua Dyer, Director Content & Strategy Delivery

Robin Fribance, Director Experience & Strategy

Yunmi Hwang, Director Branch Services

5:08 p.m. S. Ma left the meeting

Motion:

22:47

Moved by:

Councillor C. Liu

Seconded by:

S. Nasser

THAT the Board Orientation presentation be received for information.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

8.0 Reports

8.1 2023 Operating and Capital Budgets SRLIB22.11

6:04 p.m. Councillor S. Thompson left the meeting

6:04 p.m. S. Raj left the meeting

Motion:

22:48

Moved by:

S. Nasser

Seconded by:

J. Cherniak

That the Richmond Hill Public Library Board:

1. Approve the proposed RHPL 2023 Operating Budget and recommend it to City Council, through the City Treasurer, for funding consideration;
2. Approve the proposed RHPL 2023 Capital Budget and recommend it to City Council, through the City Treasurer, for funding consideration; and
3. Receive the RHPL 9-Year Capital Forecast for information.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

8.2 Non-Competitive Acquisition – Catalogue Discovery Layer for the Richmond Hill Public Library Website SRLIB22.12

Motion:

22:49

Moved by:

M. Shahnazari

Seconded by:

S. Nasser

That the Richmond Hill Public Library Board approve the non-competitive acquisition of the customer-facing catalogue discovery layer and accompanying integrated digital products from BiblioCommons.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

9.0 New Business

None

10.0 Member Announcements

Darren Solomon, CEO, advising of Regional & Local Councillor Godwin Chan member motion, to be presented at the December 7, 2022 Council Meeting, recognizing Family Literacy Day and the Library's importance to the community.

Darren Solomon, CEO, invited all board members to annual Team Appreciation Event at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, December 9, 2022 at the Oak Ridges Library.

11.0 Date of Next Meetings

The next Regular Meeting of the Library Board will be held on:

Thursday, January 19, 2023 @ 4:00 p.m. at Central Library in the Boardroom to be followed by a tour of Central Library.

12.0 Adjournment

Motion:

22:50

Moved by:

S. Nasser

Seconded by:

Councillor C. Davidson

THAT the meeting be adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

“Signed version on file in the Administration Offices”

Stephen Chait

Chair

Darren Solomon

Chief Executive Officer



Report Subject: Board Committees

Report For: Approval

Meeting Date: January 19, 2022

Staff Report #: SRLIB23.01

To: Richmond Hill Public Library Board

From: Darren Solomon, CEO

SUMMARY

With a new RHPL Board of Directors term kicking-off and exciting plans ahead, the Library would benefit from forming various ad hoc and standing Board Committees. These committees will ensure that the appropriate oversight of opportunity, risk and accountability are integrated into specific streams of work.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Richmond Hill Public Library Board:

1. Approve the formation and Terms of Reference for the following RHPL Board Committees: Intellectual Freedom Steering Committee, Master Plan Steering Committee, and Finance Steering Committee; and
2. Appoint the required Board members to each Board Committee so they may begin work.

RATIONALE

The purpose of Board Committees are to facilitate the business of the Board and to support the work of staff when Board participation may be required or beneficial. For the most part, they will be collaborative efforts between board members and staff,

leveraging each other's strengths, backgrounds, experiences and responsibilities. There will be two main types of Board Committees:

1. **Standing Committees** - Committees that run on a continual basis.
2. **Ad Hoc Committees** – Committees that are formed for a limited period of time to address a specific need. When the work of an ad hoc committee is completed, the committee is dissolved.

The scope of committees may vary from working groups, where members are expected to engage in research and development, through to steering groups, where members are primarily there to produce guidance and oversight. Committees report directly to the Board and have no authority other than to provide guidance and/or recommendations. Each committee operates within its Terms of Reference, which is established and approved by the Board. The Terms of Reference guides the committee's scope of work in four areas: Purpose, Responsibilities, Members and Duration. Each committee will have a chair and at each meeting a designated member will take Meeting Minutes, which will be brought to the next RHPL Board meeting for review.

RHPL Board Committees

Library staff recommend the following Board Committees be formed with engagement from board members and staff:

Intellectual Freedom Steering Committee

Type: Ad Hoc Committee

Purpose: To ensure the Library's approach to intellectual freedom and freedom of thought, belief and expression are in the best interests of our diverse community by reflecting and upholding Canadian law and the Library's values and policies.

Responsibilities:

- a) Review existing relevant policies and provide guidance on new policies or policy revisions;
- b) Provide guidance and recommendations to the Intellectual Freedom Working Group on frameworks that the working group will use to make decisions on challenges to intellectual freedom;
- c) Provide guidance and recommendations to the Intellectual Freedom Working Group on how to respond to challenges;
- d) Ongoing learning and review of internal and external case studies.

Members: The Committee will be made up of three Board members, the CEO, Director of Content, Director of Branch Services, Director Experience & Strategy.

Duration: The group will meet until all policies and working group recommendations are finalized, and then on an as-needed basis.

Master Plan Steering Committee

Type: Standing Committee

Purpose: To ensure the new RHPL Master Plan reflects the community's needs, supports the City of Richmond Hill's long term vision, and that its roadmap is executed according to plans.

Responsibilities:

- a) Review and provide guidance to the Master Plan Working Group on directions and key decision points;
- b) Provide final Master Plan recommendations to the Board;
- c) Support with presentations and recommendations to the City;
- d) Oversee the progress of capital projects that are on the final Master Plan roadmap and help clear roadblocks.

Members: The Committee will be made up of two Board members, the CEO, Director of Branch Services, Director Experience & Strategy, and Director of Content.

Duration: The group will meet ongoing as needed.

Finance Steering Committee

Type: Standing Committee

Purpose: To provide oversight and accountability for the Library finances, and ensure its financial position is secure and sustainable to support its future plans and the community's needs. Scope of work includes budgets and financial oversight, internal controls, investment strategies, reserve funds, and procurement.

Responsibilities:

- a) Review and provide guidance on annual budget estimates;
- b) Review of quarterly statements of revenue and expenditures;
- c) Review of the annual auditor's report;
- d) Review of financial planning activities;
- e) Evaluate existing relevant policies, and research, draft and recommend new policies or policy revisions;
- f) Review of service levels and practices provided by the City's relevant shared services, and draft and provide recommendations for improvements;
- g) Support with presentations of related reports and recommendations to the Board and to the City;

Members: The Committee will be made up of two Board members, the CEO, the City's Financial Management Advisor for the Library, and the CEO's Administrative Coordinator.

Duration: The group will meet ongoing as needed.



Report Subject: Intellectual Freedom at Richmond Hill Public Library

Report For: Approval

Meeting Date: January 19, 2023

Staff Report #: SRLIB23.02

To: Richmond Hill Public Library Board

From: Jordan Graham, Manager, Collections Development and Josh Dyer, Director, Content Strategy

SUMMARY

In 2022, libraries across North America saw a record number of challenges to intellectual freedom through the form of protests, book bans, and other censorship efforts. These efforts risk diminishing the public's access to information representing various viewpoints, and in the process weaken our democracy at a community level. The Richmond Hill Public Library is committed to upholding the principles of intellectual freedom as outlined in our policies, endorsement of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries, as well as our recognition of Canadian Law including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, this new wave of challenges requires a deepened and consolidated commitment to our guiding principles on intellectual freedom. In response, the Urban Libraries Council has developed a Declaration of Democracy intended to unite libraries across North America in protecting our democratic values.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Richmond Hill Public Library Board:

1. Reinforce RHPL's commitment to intellectual freedom by joining libraries across North America in approving the endorsement and signing of the Urban Libraries Council's Declaration of Democracy

RATIONALE

Intellectual freedom is the right to express one's views, as well as seek and receive information without interference. This includes freedom both with respect to the content of expression and the manner of expression. As key providers of access to information, libraries have a responsibility to support, defend, and promote intellectual freedom.

Library users' right to intellectual freedom is protected in international law under Article 19 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), and in Canadian law under section 2b of the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#). Furthermore, at the Richmond Hill Public Library our commitment to intellectual freedom is supported by our endorsement of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' (CFLA) [Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries](#), and documented through the following policies:

- [Collection Development Policy](#)
- [Meeting Room Policy](#)
- [Display Policy](#)
- [Customer Code of Conduct](#)

Despite these protections, intellectual freedom is under enhanced duress. According to the American Library Association, attempts to “ban or restrict library resources” have increased significantly from 156 challenges in 2020 to 781 challenges in 2022. These efforts often target marginalized or historically underrepresented voices, and are carried out by “fringe agitators” without widespread community support. In addition to the increased amount of challenges to intellectual freedom, the challenges are also

expanding beyond books and beginning to target other library activities including programs, guest speakers, display signage, and access to library spaces.

Although Canadian authorities do not track challenges in the same way as our American counterparts, evidence shows the rise in challenges is just as much a trend in Canada. In 2022, several Canadian libraries received a document titled “Notice of Personal Liability Facilitating in Exposure of Minors to Sexually Explicit Materials, Performers, Activities, and/or Events”. The notice, produced by Action4Canada, posed as a legal document citing excerpts from the Criminal Code of Canada and accused recipients of contravening the law. A [memo](#) distributed by the CFLA noted that the document had “no legal value” and appeared to be “an intimidation tactic” to coerce libraries into removing books found on the Action4Canada website and surrendering written communications or records associated with the selection and purchasing of those titles. Furthermore, drag queen story time programs hosted by Ontario libraries have been a consistent target of challenges and protests. Since November 2022, these events have prompted protests in Hamilton, Peterborough, Sarnia, and Brockville. The Brockville Public Library’s first drag queen story time held in December 2022 received broad community support from 75 program attendees and 60 supporters outside the library countering 14 protesters responsible for a bomb threat and a fire set on the library’s rooftop.

In response to the increase and evolving nature of challenges to intellectual freedom in public libraries, the Urban Libraries Council, an action and innovation group representing over 160 urban libraries across North America has developed a Declaration of Democracy. This declaration provides a baseline for building policies and actions that preserve and protect democracy in our communities. Endorsement of this declaration by the Board further strengthens our commitment to intellectual freedom and puts the Richmond Hill Public Library in-step with our colleagues and counterparts across North America.

ATTACHMENT

1. [ULC Declaration of Democracy](#)

ULC DECLARATION OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is under siege throughout the world and close to home. Daily, we witness assaults on basic freedoms and human rights we've long cherished as books are banned, programs and events are canceled, disinformation and misinformation spread unchecked and racism is institutionalized. Democracy's future is diminished when people's access to power, information, a diversity of voices and the ability to influence policy are restricted. As cornerstones of democracy, it is incumbent upon libraries to stand up against all efforts to impede the democratic process and limit the full participation in civic life.

Banning books through policy and legislation is one such example of the challenges facing us. These efforts have unfortunately met with success in some parts of the United States as lawmakers codify restrictions on reading material – and we strongly stand against the furtherance of such restrictive policymaking.

As leaders of North America's public libraries, we are committed to preserving, protecting and advancing the highest hopes and ideals of democracy so all members of our communities may fully participate in the democratic process. To meaningfully participate in society, people need access to a broad range of information and ideas, as well as opportunities for open, uncensored discourse to hear, read, debate and learn from each other's perspectives.

It is for this reason that libraries as trusted institutions in their communities join to advance this Declaration and commit to the following:

- Educating and informing the public about the rights afforded to them in the *United States Constitution* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, among them the freedom of religion, thought, speech, expression, belief, the press, peaceful assembly and association.¹
- Encouraging an active citizenry where all are engaged in creating an equitable and just society where everyone may realize their potential as individuals within the community.
- Serving as a convener for and facilitator of civic engagement and civil discourse, where all voices may be heard and respect is displayed for

community members' diverse opinions, thoughts, histories and cultural heritage.

- Increasing efforts to fight misinformation and disinformation, providing reliable resources and seeking new ways to help patrons find verifiable and accurate information.
- Leveraging programming, collections and other resources to promote human dignity, open dialogue and respect for diverse viewpoints, civil rights, and all other protections and freedoms fundamental to democracies, and based on the conviction that “laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind”², holding fast to the expectation that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice”³, and that “*the Just Society will be one in which the rights of minorities will be safe from the whims of intolerant majorities.*”⁴

We resolve to continue to create spaces where entering our doors is an act of participating in democracy, where people can read and learn freely from all points of view, make up their own minds and engage in their communities. We stand as proud leaders of libraries, and as such, we will continue to guard democracy’s great promise and ensure all those we serve are included in its fulfillment.

1 See First Amendment in the United States Constitution and Section 2 in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

2 Thomas Jefferson, from a letter to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816, enshrined on Southeast Portico of the Jefferson Memorial, Washington, D.C.

3 Martin Luther King, Jr., Washington National Cathedral, March 31, 1968, enshrined on South Wall of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, Washington, D.C.

4 Pierre Elliott Trudeau, as cited in The Essential Trudeau, ed. Ron Graham. (pp.16 – 20).

January 10, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Richmond Hill Public Library Welcomes New Board and Board Chair

The New Board Will Play an Integral Role in the Future of Library Services for Our Community



The 2022-26 Richmond Hill Public Library Board. Top row, from left: Sofia Ma, Sugantha Raj (Vice Chair), Mona Shahnazari, Stephen Chait (Board Chair), Councillor Castro Liu, and Councillor Scott Thompson. Bottom row, from left: Darren Solomon (CEO), Councillor Carol Davidson, Sadra Nasser, and Jason Cherniak.

The new Richmond Hill Public Library Board, consisting of three City of Richmond Hill Councillors and six volunteer community members, has officially been sworn in. The Board will partner with the RHPL team to pursue the Library's vision of providing world-class experiences that help residents of Richmond Hill to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world.

"We will work collaboratively with our new Library Board to ensure we continue to be relevant to the needs of our growing community and to improve people's lives," says Darren Solomon, Chief Executive Officer, Richmond Hill Public Library. "I'm thrilled that our new Board contains a diverse mix of experiences, skills, backgrounds and perspectives that will represent our community as we build modern services and spaces."

Residents applied to join the Library Board in the fall, and the new Richmond Hill City Council appointed Board members to four-year terms in November. The Board elected Stephen Chait as Board Chair and Sugantha Raj as Vice Chair during the first meeting on Dec. 5.

"It's a great honour to be elected as the RHPL Board Chair, a position I hold with high regard," says Stephen Chait, Richmond Hill Public Library Board Chair. "The Board consists of a wonderful mix of residents who are passionate about the immeasurable value that libraries provide to our community."



Working together with the Library’s leadership team, we’ll ensure we reflect the needs of our diverse community so Richmond Hill can benefit from quality library services for years to come.”

Grounded in a bold new strategic plan, RHPL is on a path to modernize how its services are delivered to our community. In 2023, the Library will launch an enhanced, online experience through a redesigned website; expand its collections beyond books to include passes to galleries and museums; and develop a Master Plan that will recommend future library spaces in Richmond Hill.

The Library will invite community members to get to know its new Board members through posts on its website and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in the coming weeks.

Richmond Hill Public Library is committed to improving people’s lives. We aim to provide each and every person in Richmond Hill with free, world-class experiences that help them thrive in a world of constant change. For more than 165 years, the Library has been a cornerstone of our community. Whether you prefer a physical or digital library experience, we offer a rich and relevant collection of resources, programs and hands-on experiences across four modern branches, our website, and through community outreach. RHPL is a safe, welcoming space for residents and businesses to connect with each other and to discover and explore new ideas and perspectives that support their wellbeing. An RHPL card is free to anyone who lives, works or goes to school in York Region. Learn more at www.rhpl.ca.

For more information, please contact:

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Manager, Communications
Richmond Hill Public Library
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Award-winning Springdale Branch, Brampton Library

The relationship between public library boards and municipalities

The work of library boards typically begins in earnest following municipal elections and the swearing-in of new councils. In Ontario, board members are typically appointed within 60 days of the first municipal council meeting and must delve into board business quickly.

Throughout late fall and early winter, public library administrators are working hard to bring new board members up to speed on strategic plans, financial issues requiring decisions, and policies waiting for discussion and approval. The biggest learning curve exists for new appointees and those with limited board experience. Local board governance is just as complex as municipal governance.

Libraries are valued as ubiquitous community institutions. Decisions on library funding, branch location, and programming can elicit strong opinions from many different elements within each unique community. In particular, many public library board members quickly learn that although the *Public Libraries Act* grants the library the status of a corporation – with the decision-making authority for personnel, policies, and how funds are spent – decision making is not made in a silo and is detached from other

considerations in the municipality by virtue of the legislation.

It is not simply the need to consult with multiple partners within the municipality. Boards must be politically astute to acknowledge the collaborative nature required to deliver sound governance frameworks.

The Autonomy Paradox

The public library board is one of the many agencies, boards, and commissions (ABCs), along with municipal councils that deliver local government services to residents. ABCs, while sometimes criticized for creating a diffused governance structure that hampers a central administration of government services, are nonetheless integral to municipal services that residents rely on and expect to be delivered.

Councils and ABCs must not only strive to greater cooperation and coordination to ensure effective service delivery and efficient spending of public monies, but also remain respectful of the statutory roles of each governing body.

The library board's role can be summarized as providing oversight of the library's operations, ensuring effective delivery of service, and proposing a budget required for the delivery of service. The role of council can be

interpreted to providing overarching financial oversight on an annual basis.

While boards receive financial statements regularly, council's opportunity to consider the financial situation of the library occurs at budget time. Section 24 of the *Public Libraries Act* empowers council to approve or amend the board's estimates required for funding the operations of the library. Not only is this role expected of elected representatives, but councillors also have particular interest at examining the library's finances.

In Ontario, approximately 90 percent of library funding is provided by the municipality. While the board maintains financial oversight of the library, council – which has the responsibility to distribute the revenue from local taxes and other sources to various ABCs – decides whether to provide the funds requested by the library to sustain healthy public services.

The governance structure and the funding framework of public libraries in Ontario has the potential to create tensions between board and council.



Brandon Fratarcangeli is a Consultant with the Ontario Library Service.

Levels of funding, location of branches, and capital investments in library infrastructure are typical stress points between library boards and municipal officials or councillors.

Between board members and councillors, and between senior library staff and municipal staff, all these parties hold legitimate responsibilities to residents to ensure financial oversight and good library governance and service to the community. Multiple stakeholders with decision-making authority can obscure where statutory responsibilities for decisions may fall.

When there is a gulf of misunderstanding as to who is responsible for what, uncoordinated decision making and planning will affect the quality of service provided to residents. An autonomy paradox exists.

Although a legally independent organization, the library cannot sustain itself alone. Municipal support and coordination are crucial to success in delivering quality and thoughtful library service to each unique community.

Establishing Responsibilities and Opening Lines of Communication

There is a statutory division of responsibility between the board overseeing operations and council appointing board members and providing the funds to operate. Beyond this, many municipalities provide various administrative services to public libraries.

Whether it is providing the facility for the library to operate or providing services such as human resources support or payroll preparation, many library systems are much more integrated into the municipal administrative structure than a reading of the *Public Libraries Act* would suggest. They are also more integrated than other ABCs, such as public health boards and conservation authorities. To avoid stepping on each other's roles, clear and concise consideration to act and make changes that would affect library operations, staff, and funding is required.

When many library boards were established in the first half of the 20th century, the administrative, staffing, and financial structures were much less complex. Library boards often owned the library building and managed the payroll. While this structure continues to exist, over the course of the late 20th century, there has

been greater emphasis on the reduction of administrative duplications and finding efficiencies. Many library boards and municipalities agreed to share the responsibility of administrative services and, for the most part, municipalities own and maintain library buildings.

There is a varying degree to which these divisions of responsibilities are formalized in Ontario. In many cases, there are no formal agreements between library boards and municipalities for services such as payroll administration or information technology support.

For years, these informal arrangements often work without a hitch. However, without the necessary communication procedures and service expectations formally stated, seemingly minor adjustments unilaterally taken by one party may have considerable impact on operations. For instance, changes to public access WiFi at the library requires increased security, but it also increases barriers by imposing login credentials and has the potential to limit access online for vulnerable populations, which subsequently weakens the library's mandate to ensure freedom of information.

Over the past decade, the use of memorandums of understanding to formalize the relationship between the library and the municipality has increased. In most cases, the memorandums of understanding relates to the library accessing municipal services and staff support.

The agreements and the financial terms vary considerably across the province. In some cases, the library board agrees on a payment to the municipality for the service. In other cases, the costs are absorbed by the municipality when annual budgets are established. Examples of memorandums of understanding between boards and municipalities include:

- **Terms of lease of library building** – Whether leased at market value or a nominal fee, the terms often include what party is responsible for various costs. Often, the library is responsible for utility costs, general maintenance, and insurance, while the municipality is responsible for costs of a capital nature, such as electrical services, HVAC, and the parking lot.
- **Human resources support** – Administration of payroll and benefit services and advice related to the

Employment Standards Act, 2000 or the collective agreement, personnel advice, workplace training, and policy advice.

- **Financial services** – Purchasing services, budget preparation assistance, financial statement preparation, and accounts payable services.
- **Information technology services** – Internal and public network infrastructure, as well as support and maintenance.

While there is no standard to the level of detail and complexity of agreements seen around the province, the utility of having agreements in place can quickly foster constructive conversations between parties when there are divergent perspectives and approaches to nuances of each party's work and priorities.

Constructive, open, and connected dialogue can occur effectively by setting pen to paper to outline needs, priorities, and requirements for all parties concerned.

Building Trust

For library boards considering memoranda of understanding with a municipality, an important factor into obtaining buy-in from the municipality is demonstrated by a willingness and genuine desire to partner and align library priorities with those of the municipality.

As library boards work on strategic planning, for instance, are there potential strategic directions that align with the municipality's strategic goals? Is the library an active partner in marketing municipal initiatives and projects?

In some municipalities, the diffused nature of local government has reinforced the historical distance between public library boards and municipal administration. As municipal officials work toward good administrative practices, the diffused nature of local government in Ontario has muddied responsibilities over time.

To ensure quality provision of library service – a goal shared by all in the municipal sector – it is best to have clear roles and responsibilities in place and a collaborative set of voices at the table to best achieve sound governance, quality service, and effective local collaborations. MW



GEORGE CUFF

George B. Cuff, FCMC, our governance zone expert, has been involved in local government in one way or another since 1970. He has been a recreation and youth specialist, a department head, a mayor for 12 years, and a consultant/advisor to municipalities since 1976. He is the author of 10 books on local government policy governance. His latest book is *The Mayor*. He has also written hundreds of articles and columns in *Municipal World* since 1984.

New councils must review, ask questions, listen, decide

Every newly elected council faces a lot of substantive tasks as soon as it is sworn in. Each will face almost immediate pressure to take action on outstanding issues, some of which may have been left over from its predecessor council. However, before acting or making headline-grabbing statements (which will fall flat when found to have no substance), a wise council will understand the need to be thoroughly briefed by an apolitical administration as to the actual history of key issues.

Review

There is a considerable body of information members of a new council should anticipate receiving as they enter elected life. Some of this is generic to every council and some will be community specific. Those that are found in virtually every briefing package will likely include the *Municipal Act* and the *Planning Act* (both of which are known by other titles, varying by jurisdiction).

Some documents will vary from community to community, including:

- procedure bylaw;
- code of conduct;
- policies;
- bylaws;
- rules of delegations;
- strategic plan (current);
- budget and business plan;
- fees and charges policy/bylaw;
- Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) bylaw/position description/contract;
- organization structure; and
- agenda-building process.

What will not be found will include: instructions on how to run the Zamboni or grader; how to physically prepare the budget; how to wipe iPhones belonging to departed staff; how to access personnel files; resumes of those below the CAO level; etc.

Ask questions

If done right, the CAO, supported by department heads, will bring forward reports on key issues to be found on the agenda. These have taken time to prepare and thus should be read with close attention by members of council.

In the time allocated between when the agenda package arrives and the council meeting begins, it is expected that a member of council will read the package and prepare themselves for each meeting. Some of the matters on every agenda will appear straight-forward, whereas others might leave you wondering about which option (if any) to pursue. The key is to read carefully and set aside sufficient time to think through what is being proposed.

While many reports from management will be grounded in solid practice and will likely reflect current council policy or precedent, others will propose that council move in a decidedly different direction based on current circumstances. Being perplexed as to why we should do so is an entirely healthy response; simply accepting the advice of administration because "they are experienced and we are not" is seldom if ever helpful.

One of the keys to good governance is the willingness by all members to ask questions. Such questions should be:



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- directed toward the CAO, who might in turn redirect to a department head (their choice, not yours);
- respectful in tone and content;
- pointed at the key underpinnings of the issue and not at some minor matter; and
- substantive and born out of a desire to understand (and not an attempt to play “gotcha”).

Someone at a council meeting who is really listening to a response will often be seen to jot down the salient answers and may later come back with allied questions that serve to get at the rationale of a particular proposition.

Listen

Political conversations are too often characterized by “this is what I think” statements followed by a lengthy monologue wherein the speaker tries to whittle down any potential opposition by either verbiage or volume. Many such conversations are one-sided and leave little room for the respondent to answer without being interrupted. That is largely due to an audience that has concluded the matter (in their own minds) and only wants a chorus of approval.

Most of us need to work at active listening. We know we are better understood if we only had somewhat more airtime. As our counterpart speaks, our minds are thinking through a clever answer rather than according the speaker the respect we believe we rightly deserve.

Someone at a council meeting who is really listening to a response will often be seen to jot down the salient answers and may later come back with allied questions that serve to get at the rationale of a particular proposition. Bullies, on the other hand, use ridicule, innuendo, and outright sarcasm to undermine and cause misery for those on the other side of the table.

Decide

Decisions are best taken when the fullness of time has concluded, and all have had an opportunity to have their questions addressed. Quick decisions are not necessarily sound, and a lengthy decision process is not always wise. Recognizing that for some people there will never be enough time, a decision is required in the final analysis to move an agenda forward. If the matter being decided is substantive, requesting feedback from administration on how well that decision “worked” may be appropriate and often useful if not edifying. The decision should result in a council motion, a new (or revised) policy, or a resolution that addresses the matter clearly without unnecessary legalese.

A council that utilizes its experience and its capacity for common sense will frequently make use of each of these processes while seldom referencing any. These will become commonplace as discussions flow, responses are heard, everyone who wishes to be heard participates, and decisions are made. MW