

**MINUTES of the****SASKATOON PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD**

The Saskatoon Public Library Board met on Wednesday, September 16, 2020, by video conference.

Present:        Brett Bradshaw (Chair)        Elise Truscott  
                 Hilary Gough                     John Thronberg  
                 Cheryl Starr                         Markel Chernenkoff  
                 Elizabeth Kuley                     Carol Cooley, Director of Libraries & CEO  
                 Jim Siemens                         Rachel Landriault (recorder)

Regrets:

Guests:        Beth Cote, Director, Public Services

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B. Bradshaw, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:08 pm.

**AGENDA**

Moved by E. Truscott, seconded by C. Starr **THAT the Agenda of September 16, 2020, be approved as circulated, including any items removed from or added to the Agenda.**

Carried.

- Added Fines Free Report
- Added Variance Report

**Previous Minutes**

Moved by M. Chernenkoff, seconded by E. Truscott **THAT the Saskatoon Public Library Board minutes of June 17, 2020, be adopted as circulated, including any revisions to be made.**

Carried.

Moved by M. Chernenkoff, seconded by J. Thronberg **THAT the Saskatoon Public Library Board minutes of August 28, 2020, be adopted as circulated, including any revisions to be made.**

Carried.

No declaration of conflict of interest.

**DEPUTATIONS/PRESENTATIONS/PUBLIC MEETING**

No deputations, presentations or public meeting.

## **C. NEW BUSINESS**

### **C.1 Board Self-Evaluation**

B. Bradshaw stated that the Board completes the self-evaluation tool annually. R. Landriault will compile the responses into one document. The Governance Committee will review the collected responses and the summary and prepare a report for a future Board Meeting.

C. Cooley informed the Board that the agenda for the November Board meeting would be released on November 10th. Therefore, the report should be sent to C. Cooley and R. Landriault by November 6th for inclusion in the agenda package.

J. Thronberg, as Chair of the Governance Committee, requested that Board members complete the self-evaluation questionnaire and return it via email to him and R. Landriault by October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020. A Governance Committee meeting will be scheduled within the following two weeks of the submission deadline to review the results and prepare the report for the November Board meeting.

### **C.2 Public Attendance**

C. Cooley stated that there were no regular Board meetings in July and August. Now that regular meetings have resumed, the need to find a way for the public to join the public portions of Board meetings was identified. She proposed continuing the use of Zoom for both the public and in-camera portions of the meeting.

J. Thronberg stated that he had successfully used Zoom for other meetings and supported the suggestion. Implementing this solution is timely as there might be interest from the public in attending Board meetings soon.

The Board agreed with the proposed solution.

### **C.3 Fines Free**

B. Cote joined the meeting.

C. Cooley stated that the Board has been talking about reducing barriers to SPL services since 2015. She believes that the Regina Public Library might propose to go fines free. There has been a lot of customization from SILS due to COVID that would support SPL going fine free while other libraries may choose not to go that route. She noted that the fine free movement is sweeping North America, including Canada, mostly due to Covid-19.

B. Cote referenced bullet #2 of the rationales provided in the report stating that it is vital to remember that the barriers do not affect everyone equally. Barriers such as fines disproportionately affect people who face poverty. SPL has heard patrons with late fees express their discomfort or fear of returning to the library because of them.

M. Chernenkoff stated that he supports the idea. However, he asked at what point SPL would apply fees for items that are not returned, adding that if there are no fees, people may not return their items at all. He also asked how SPL would manage the return of an item that was charged to a patron.

C. Cooley responded that an item would be considered lost after 60 days, and fees would then be applied. A patron would receive an initial communication indicating that their item(s) will soon become overdue. A second notice would be sent advising them their item(s) is now due, requesting they return it before a specific date that corresponds to 60 days, or they will incur fees. When the 60 days have elapsed, the patron would be charged for the item. SPL was considering 90 days but decided to try 60 first. If a patron has a charge on their account, they would be unable to borrow material.

B. Cote added that SPL offers payment plans that can be structured according to their situation. Once an agreement is reached, the patron could borrow material in the interim, as long as they respect the agreement.

C. Cooley stated that at times, SPL uses values-based services to remove the charges depending on the situation.

E. Truscott indicated that she supports moving in this direction. Referencing page 5 of the agenda package – Budget Impact, she asked clarification on the statement “the loss will be offset by gaining employee efficiencies and launching a fundraising campaign when SPL resumes normal operations following COVID-19”. Also, she assumes that if this is launched, it would be reflected in the budget.

C. Cooley responded that the 2019 budget projected revenue was \$125k, but actuals came in at \$26k, which indicates that the revenue loss would not be significant. That revenue decreased over time because they didn’t always collect the fees. SPL also considered the level of effort of managing money and having daily conversations with patrons with blocks due to penalties or processing fees, throughout all SPL Libraries. Often, patrons are embarrassed by having fines, which, from their perspective, leads to unpleasant patron interactions. Eliminating those daily interactions could offset the \$26k of estimated revenue.

E. Truscott referenced the table row on page 5 of the agenda package - “loss in revenue negatively impacting budget” and asked if the fundraising campaign is new or if it’s something that is being considered.

B. Cote stated that SPL does not have a comprehensive plan on what that would look like at this time. They are examining what the Halifax Public Library has done. Some patrons look at their fee payments as being a donation.

H. Gough asked what the implications of the 60 days before charging for a late item would be. She wondered if late fees collected from an item that would have been late by 60 days be equal to the value of the item itself.

B. Cote responded that currently, fines are limited to a maximum of \$7 per item, which could add up if the patron had several items, or if they renew the late item and are late again on their second loan, they could be charged a second time. Currently, late items that have not been brought back within 30 days, without contacting SPL, is considered lost (we are considering changing that to 60 days). Every item in the catalogue

includes the price SPL paid for the item, which does not amortize. When an item is lost, the patron is charged the purchase price of the item and the maximum fine of \$7 as a processing fee, which is more than the purchase price of the item itself. SPL proposed removing the late fees and charge only for the lost item, and if the missing item is returned, SPL will remove the charge altogether.

C. Cooley added that SPL could waive the fees for their books, but they may still be required to charge late fees for SILS items. Libraries currently keep the late fees and lost fees from reciprocal borrowing (SILS books). However, at the end of the year, libraries do a tally, and they could potentially invoice other libraries (including SPL) for their lost items. She is hoping that, if the Regina Public Library goes fine free as well as SPL, they could have the flexibility of doing so without hindering the fines revenue that other libraries might require for their operations.

H. Gough appreciated receiving the background information. She suggested that if one of SPL's goal is to reduce the level of effort for managing late fees and replacement costs, it might want to consider flat rates by types of materials. She would endorse any decision Administration makes on simplifying their processes for SPL loans and reciprocal borrowing. This includes the possibility that if SPL decides to implement a flat fee for lost items and being charged a higher rate from other libraries at the end of the year. She would be happy to see that budget line removed while increasing library services accessibility.

H. Gough added that she had heard from patrons that they want to see more transparency about the items they borrow. Particularly with reciprocal borrowing because it's not always evident where the book is coming from.

C. Cooley thanked the Board for their comments and support because SPL feels that, through their institutional relationships in SILS, they are obligating their patrons to another library's rules, and it does not believe this should be happening.

B. Bradshaw asked if SPL had a timeline for reinstating reciprocal borrowing.

C. Cooley responded that SPL is focussed on reopening their libraries with the in-branch services and contactless holds pickup. They continue to consider the impact of a potential wave 2 of COVID when making decisions. They don't want to institute SILS holds and then have to pull back if a second wave arrives. They need to recruit Circulation Associates at FMCL to ensure they can manage reciprocal borrowing when that service starts. She believes that by the end of November, they will have a sense of their capacity needs to offer that service.

B. Bradshaw thanked C. Cooley for sharing that information.

B. Bradshaw asked what the next steps would be in public announcements if the Board approved the recommendation.

H. Gough suggested that the term "late fees" be used to clarify any potential confusion as to what fees would be eliminated.

C. Cooley stated that J. Sampson and her team would prepare communications about the decision to move forward with fines-free.

Moved by E. Kuley, seconded by J. Thronberg **THAT the Saskatoon Public Library Board adopts a fine-free model recommended in the report.**

Carried.

## **D. REPORTS FROM THE BOARD**

### **D.1 Chairperson Updates**

None.

### **D.2 SLTA Report**

J. Thronberg informed the group that SLTA's Annual General Meeting is scheduled for October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, via Zoom. Anyone interested in joining the meeting is welcome. He will forward the newsletter with the link to SPL Board members.

B. Cote left the meeting.

## **E. REPORT FROM ADMINISTRATION**

### **E.1 Director of Libraries & CEO Updates**

#### Variance Report

C. Cooley presented SPL's variance report based on July 31<sup>st</sup> actuals and opened the floor to questions. She stated that expenses related to COVID were reported as a separate line item. SPL is tracking COVID expenses burn rate and, for some things, included projections. Some COVID expenses were reported under "equipment replacement."

H. Gough stated that she was surprised to see an overall favourable variance because of the unexpected and unbudgeted expenses incurred over the last few months. However, she understands that this is not uncommon because of reduced operations during COVID. She referenced the budget line for Collections and asked if SPL's collection acquisitions were strategically amended due to COVID.

C. Cooley stated that, as mentioned at previous Board meeting, S. Gregor and T. Gust performed SPL's audit this year and uncovered prior period adjustments of approximately \$500k that had not been reported in SPL's books. For several reasons, SPL had unbudgeted FTEs throughout the system and fewer vacancies than usual. She was already concerned about the 2020 year-end in January/February, so they started looking at cost reduction options, Collections being part of that analysis. When the pandemic began, SPL had made their estimated year-end projections. Since then, due to COVID, SPL Libraries had to temporarily close, which resulted in lower security costs and higher cleaning costs, so those offset each other. An updated estimate of year-end projections will be carried out. Depending on the results of the projections, some of the cost reductions that were made might be reversed, including that of Collections.

H. Gough stated that what she understands is that some of the cuts were intentional and not related to COVID, and some are adjustments as a result of the last audit.

C. Cooley confirmed that her understanding was correct.

E. Kuley asked if S. Gregor's report would provide details on where SPL saved costs, such as reduced costs for security etc.

C. Cooley responded that it would not include that level of detail. However, she assured the Board that S. Gregor would have done a thorough analysis.

### Library Reopening

C. Cooley stated that a specialized team from the City of Saskatoon did a walkthrough of SPL Libraries and provided their perspective on the measures SPL took to ensure it could safely provide in-person services to patrons. They were pleased with the steps taken and gave a "thumbs up." Patrons are slowly returning to libraries, and SPL employees feel confident that they can safely deliver services. She believes that the measures taken can sustain SPL's ability to provide these services for the duration of the pandemic.

C. Cooley informed the Board that the Carlyle King Library is located in the Cosmo Civic Centre, which is opening later than most civic centres. The Centre plans to open from 12:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Due to hours of work constraints and employee capacity, Carlyle King is not able to deliver services during the entirety of those hours, specifically during the evenings. The Library could continue with contactless pickups in the morning and open the Library for in-person service from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

B. Bradshaw asked why patrons are slow in returning to the libraries.

C. Cooley responded that although reopening information is posted on SPL's website, information about Dr. Freda Ahenakew (DFA), Mayfair (MF), and Frances Morrison Central Library's (FMCL) reopening mostly travels by word of mouth.

B. Bradshaw asked for confirmation that patrons can enter the Libraries to collect their holds, but they can't stay.

C. Cooley responded yes and added that patrons also have access to computers. She informed the Board that each Library location limits how many people can be in their buildings at any given time. Keeping this in mind, when the Cold Weather Strategy kicks in, SPL will reduce the maximum number of people allowed in the building by two to ensure capacity for emergencies.

B. Bradshaw asked if the hours of operation would increase when the Cold Weather Strategy starts.

C. Cooley responded that SPL relies heavily on casual employees that can work at multiple locations to meet capacity needs. However, to reduce the risk of COVID transmissions between locations, SPL has created work location "bubbles," restricting employees from travelling and working out of multiple Libraries. Also, the Collective Agreement limits employees to working no more than two evenings a week and one Saturday in four. With these limitations, it is challenging to have all the employees required at all locations to extend hours during a Cold Weather Strategy period. They will re-evaluate this in the future, keeping in mind the evolving pandemic situation.

B. Bradshaw asked if FMCL is typically busy during evenings of a Cold Weather Strategy period.

C. Cooley responded that they are not because the shelters are open at that time. FMCL would mostly be busy during the early morning and throughout the day.

H. Gough informed the Board that City Council and the Province have teamed up to fund a new outreach project to address homelessness and addiction in the downtown area. The Saskatoon Tribal Council will lead the project. There is general acknowledgement that there is a need for better support to get people into safe housing and that reference services are needed to manage that. The collaborative lessons learned from housing people during COVID, the evacuation of the Northwoods Inn and Suites etc. have pushed for collaboration on this. Council acknowledged that winter makes this even more complicated. The Saskatoon Housing Initiative will be reaching out in terms of the Cold Weather Strategy. They know that everyone will have adjusted operations because of COVID, so there needs to be a new element to that strategy to accommodate the spaces that won't be available in the winter. She encouraged SPL to engage in those conversations as early as possible, so there are no surprises when the cold weather arrives.

C. Cooley stated that SPL had contacted them this week and thanked H. Gough for the information.

Moved by C. Starr, seconded by H. Gough **THAT the Reports from Administration be received as information.**

Carried.

## **F. BUSINESS CARRIED FORWARD**

### **F.1 Pandemic Policy**

C. Cooley stated that the Board reviewed the Pandemic, Public Health & Emergency Response Policy on June 17<sup>th</sup> and requested some changes. The Policy was edited as discussed.

B. Bradshaw opened the floor for questions or comments.

Moved by J. Siemens, seconded by E. Kuley **THAT, the Saskatoon Public Library Board approves the Pandemic, Public Health & Emergency Response Policy.**

Carried.

## **IN-CAMERA SESSION**

Moved by J. Thronberg, seconded by H. Gough **THAT the meeting move in-camera for the purpose of addressing matters pertaining to Economic/Financial – Land as permitted under Sections 17(1)(d) and (e) of LAFOIPP and matters pertaining to Labour/Personnel under Sections 16(1)(c) of LAFOIPP.**

Carried.

Board moved in-camera at 5:30 pm.

Board moved into public session at 7:58 pm.

Moved by J. Siemens, seconded by J. Thronberg **THAT the Saskatoon Public Library Board approves the Bargaining Proposal as presented.**

Carried.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by H. Gough, seconded by C. Starr **THAT the Saskatoon Public Library Board does now adjourn at 7:59 pm to meet again October 21, 2020, by videoconference or at the call of the Chair.**

Carried.