

**MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF  
THE GREATER SUDBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD**

September 27, 2023  
Hybrid Meeting

Commencement: 5:19 p.m.  
Adjournment: 7:45 p.m.

**PRESENT**

M. Bellmore, K. Bowman, F. Cormier, M. Lamarche, T. Laughren, M. Signoretti, A. Sizer, A. Thomson

**REGRETS**

P. Arora

**STAFF**

Brian Harding, CEO and Chief Librarian  
Mette Krüger, Manager of Libraries and Heritage Resources  
Colleen Burns, Administrative Co-ordinator of Library Services

**GUESTS**

N/A

**CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting was called to order at 5:19 pm.

**LAND  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Greater Sudbury Public Library serves a community located on the lands of the Anishnawbek Peoples and within the territory of the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850. This is the traditional territory of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Sagamok First Nation. Greater Sudbury Public Library gratefully acknowledges these Indigenous Nations for their guardianship of this land.

**DECLARATIONS OF  
CONFLICT OF INTEREST  
AND GENERAL NATURE  
THEREOF**

None declared

**AGENDA**

The following motion was presented:

2023-33 K. Bowman / M. Lamarche

**THAT** the agenda of the SIXTH meeting of the Greater Sudbury Public Library Board, September 27, 2023, be approved

**CARRIED**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

The following motion was presented:

2023-34 A. Thomson / F. Cormier

**THAT** the Consent Agenda be approved.

**CARRIED**

Board members asked if meetings could be held at other library locations. Brian agreed to arrange this in the future.

**PRESENTATIONS**

7.1 New Central Library Update (Brian Harding)

Brian let the Board know there will be a special meeting planned soon to discuss the New Central Library.

## **Presentation**

Brian gave a status update on the items he has requested from the City team.

### *Pre-design*

- Feasibility study – CGS has agreed to provide some info to us
- Site Evaluation – GSPL staff completed this work, validating that 200 Brady St. could be feasible
- Structural feasibility – the City has shared the report with Brian, but we don't yet know if the building has the structural feasibility to support our project

### *Design Development*

- Functional Program – we are moving from Block and Stack into schematic design, homing in on an agreeable layout
- Code Compliance – before commencing this stage, CGS needs the Library Board's decision to continuing exploring the 200 Brady St. location. This needs to be complete before they go to Council for decision in December.
- Parking Model – the City has committed to conducting a parking study as part of the project
- Accessibility/Sustainability Features – we understand there is a commitment from the City to have enhanced Accessibility and Sustainability at 200 Brady, but we lack details

### *Project Management*

- Governance/Ownership Model – condo model from JE is not suitable at this new building. The GSPL/CGS Operating Agreement defines how we operate within several City-owned buildings, which can inform our agreement at Tom Davies Square.

A Board member asked if the Art Gallery and SMFAA are going to be within this building as well. Brian replied that is the plan, though each partner will have its own separate occupancy agreement with the City.

- Terms of Reference – Through the Junction East process, we did not have an agreement, and this led to tension around decision-making authority. Brian is advocating for an agreement to identify roles and responsibilities. He has identified the City of Guelph's TOR for their recent New Central Library project as a good example that the City team has agreed to consider.

A Board member asked who our main contact on the City team will be once Ian Woods is retired. Brian shared that the City's CAO will become the project sponsor in the interim until Ian's replacement has been hired.

- Project Schedule – tentative agreement to have this soon
- Stakeholder Engagement – in Q4, the library will undertake

our own stakeholder engagement to help us address their concerns and build community support for the project

- Project Budget (Capital / Operational) –this is anticipated to come to Council in December
- Communications Plan – we are looking to ramp up external communications on the project.

A Board member asked what the next steps are for the project, and what process will be followed for choosing the design firm. Brian replied that the City intends to pursue a single-source solution. We've expressed a desire to participate in choosing the consultants, as was the case with the Junction East project.

The Board member asked for more information about single sourcing. Brian let them know that City staff have Delegated Authority on the project, which allows them to make decisions to expedite the design process. The decision point is expected at Council in December, so Council may ask for more information about the single sourcing at that time.

The Board member asked if the City might decide to go back to the original firm. Brian indicated he doesn't know who the firm will be. The purpose is to complete the project within 30 to 36 months, which requires single sourcing the design firm. They would likely have an RFP process for construction. The Board member recommends an RFP process to ensure the firm can handle this complex a project. The Board member asked to be kept informed about the selection process. Brian indicated that he would follow up with Ian to get more information to share with the Board.

#### *Current direction*

The City will bring a report and a decision point to Council in December. They intend to have Class D costing and to have completed the Code Compliance process by then.

A Board member asked for details on parking for staff and patrons. Brian answered that staff would likely park in a paid off-site lot. For patron parking we have indicated a need for at least two hours of free validated parking for patrons, and that there be spaces available for them to park.

#### *Design development*

Library staff have spent a lot of time on this stage, coming to a three-floor design with the library spaces stacked, coming off the elevators. Initially, we had looked at having more of our program on the main floor, spread out between two wings, but that was not suitable for many reasons, so we shifted to stacking the program on three floors on the north side.

The design appears to support our functional program; library staff are currently working to validate that.

A Board member likes how people will be able to get many things done in one location, including library and municipal services.

A Board member asked if supports will be added to increase the load capacity. Brian indicated he doesn't know yet what the plan will be to ensure the structure can support the library. The floor loading is better on the first floor, but we can't put all our collections there. It's possible the upper floors may need some structural improvements to support our collections.

A Board member asked if the building is big enough to fit the library's entire program. Brian replied that library staff have been working with the City team and an architect to determine fit. The architect has been transparent about the square footage and some of the areas available appear to provide greater square footage than what we had at Junction East.

Brian will present a final square footage estimate at the Special Meeting to be held.

#### *Next Steps*

Brian will present a decision point to the Board at a special meeting in early October. Once staff have validated the architect's designs, Brian will ask for the Board's endorsement to proceed to the next stage of work.

#### Work to come:

- Further design work
- Stakeholder engagement
- Terms of reference
- Parking study
- Communications

On the topic of communications, Brian referred to the recent media attention on the library's location (articles from Elm Place and Red Oak management). Brian suggested the Board may wish to issue a media advisory to clarify our position and state that we are committed to working with City staff through to the December decision point.

The Chair provided a summary of a meeting that took place with himself, Brian, and the Elm Place owner (the Mayor and City team were made aware). A Board member asked if Elm Place is off the table. The Chair clarified it was formally considered during an earlier stage of the process but was not identified as a preferred location.

A Board member mentioned that the Mayor's comments at last night's Council meeting clarified that there are no other options being considered at this time. Brian agreed that the library, the Mayor and Council have been clear on that point but mentioned that there is a public communication opportunity to clear up any possible confusion and reduce the risk of harming our relationship with our partners AGS, SMFAA and CGS. Brian will work with the Chair to write a media advisory from the Board on this topic.

## ITEMS FOR ACTION

### 8.1 Report - 2024/2025 Draft Budget

#### **Report attached**

Brian presented three options in the Draft Budget for the Board's consideration. In his presentation, Brian brought three areas of the Budget to the Board's attention:

#### *Alternative Materials Recovery*

In the past, libraries have relied upon fines as a mechanism to ensure our materials are returned to us, but this has not proven to be a successful tactic. Brian's understanding is that this Board is more concerned about the revenue loss than the value of fines as a means to recover our items.

#### *IT Recoveries*

Through the Operating Agreement drafting process, Brian has been working with Kevin Fowke at CGS to bring our IT recoveries in line with the IT services we are receiving. Kevin has agreed to freeze our current payment level (instead of paying the proposed increases of \$70,000 for 2024 and \$40,000 for 2025) while we finalize the Operating Agreement with the City.

#### *Contribution to Capital*

Up to now, we have gone through the City's capital process which has not been successful for the City. Brian is proposing an alternative, whereby the Library Board shift \$50,000 of the Operating budget to a capital account and use that for capital expenditures throughout the year. This would be earmarked for furniture, fixtures, and equipment rather than building infrastructure costs. It could also be used to support our own internal IT costs such as for our ILS (this is not covered by our IT recoveries).

#### **Discussion**

A Board member asked for more information concerning the rationale for eliminating fines and forgoing \$100,000 of revenue.

Brian replied that while overdue fines are intended to guarantee recovery of our materials, in practice they create a barrier for many people using the library, including children and people in lower income brackets. GSPL is focused on eliminating barriers.

We have been fine-free for three years and we haven't encountered an issue in getting our materials back. Staff have developed an Alternate Materials Recovery model which presents alternate methods to get our materials back.

A Board member added that most library systems in Ontario are already fine-free, including Laurentian University.

A Board member presented four questions:

1. If we brought the budget in at 4.7%, would that \$100,000 represent the 0.2% difference? If not, what amount would?

Brian replied that the 0.2% difference to meet the City's target budget increase would be approximately \$16,000.

2. In your draft budget document, you state "Year-end actuals for overdue fines typically fall short of estimates. In 2019 total overdue fines actuals were approximately \$70,000." So where did the \$100,000 come from?

Brian replied that historically the City would set a high revenue target for fines and fees which was not based on the previous year's actuals. Brian doesn't believe that is a sustainable approach.

3. Since the elimination of fines does not eliminate charges for lost/missing materials, and given as you say that inflation is 8-10% in the last two years which would suggest that these charges would climb, what do you estimate that the library will collect from these fees? Has this amount been taken into account with the \$100,000 estimate?

Brian replied that the total fines and fees amount is about \$150,000, of which \$100,000 is from fines and the rest from replacement fees, which are not being eliminated. The replacement costs are a lagging value – we recover the cost we paid for an item originally, not the cost to replace it now.

One Board member suggested tweaking the policy to reflect the actual replacement cost. Brian indicated that may be possible but it may be inefficient to regularly update the replacement values for the entire collection. Another Board member inquired if the library could levy an inflationary increase of 3% per year (this is the practice of Council for most cost-recovery-based Municipal user fees). Brian indicated that a percentage increase may not reflect the true cost-recovery value and shared that a more common model for public libraries is to impose an administrative fee on replacement charges which could cover the inflationary increase.

4. If the \$100,000 were factored into the budget, in 2025, the budget seems to be able to come into Council's guidelines of a 0.8% reduction. ( $4.7 - 0.8 = 3.9$ ). The proposed budget for the following year comes in at 3.66%. If in fact this is true, the elimination of fines this year appears like a one-time event. Could we cashflow part of year-end actuals from Reserves?

Brian advised against that practice. Reserves are typically used for one-time capital costs, whereas this would be offsetting an operational deficit. We may do that retroactively to offset a year-end deficit if necessary but it is not a best practice to build annual operational dependencies on reserve funds.

A Board member asked: if we are eliminating this source of revenue, will the taxpayers end up paying for it rather than the users of the library? Brian replied that he understood the intent of the Public Libraries Act was to fund services not through user fees—including

overdue fines—but primarily through the municipal tax levy. Historically GSPL was able to offset a small portion of its tax-levy impact through overdue fines but that was not the reason overdue fines were implemented—reducing the tax-levy impact was a side-effect of overdue fines. If overdue fines are eliminated staff will continue to identify other sources of revenue to offset the tax-levy impact.

A Board member inquired what happens if someone lacks the means to pay the replacement cost of a lost or damaged item. If we forgive their fees, what prevents it from recurring? Brian replied that in some cases replacement fees are forgiven based on certain criteria. A patron's borrowing privileges are suspended once the amount of replacement fees a patron owes crosses a certain threshold.

A Board member asked what the difference is between replacement costs and late fines, and if we use means testing to forgive fees in cases where people can't afford to pay, why wouldn't we apply the same logic for late fines? Brian replied that replacement fees represent a tangible cost to the Library to replace an asset, late fines do not represent a tangible and are a strictly punitive measure. Applying a means test to late fine forgiveness is an option though it is operationally complicated to do so. Staff are recommending that late fines be eliminated altogether.

Brian added that with late fines the Library is punishing people to incentivize them to do something we want them to do. This complicates our relationship with our patrons. Since we went temporarily fine-free in 2020, that relationship has changed – people are free of that shame, and the nature of staff's work has changed – the nature of their work is to build relationships with patrons, not to punish them.

A Board member asked if other libraries have created ways of making up those funds? Mette replied that Ottawa Public Library now uses a collections agency to recover outstanding fees resulting from theft of materials.

Brian added that while we have been focusing on the revenue problem in the context of becoming fine free there is a problem whether the Library maintains overdue fines or not. We need to account for approximately \$100,000 in missing revenue. Firstly, our patrons are now used to not paying fines, we would likely just see a reduction in usage if we decided to reinstate fines.

Secondly, as we shift our collections to digital, we don't have a mechanism to collect fines on digital collections. If you follow that into the future, we will have less and less opportunity to collect fines as time goes on. If we did reinstate fines, patrons may then choose to shift to digital materials, perpetuating the lost revenue problem.

Eliminating overdue fines is a prompt to get in front of this issue rather than just perpetuating a problem that will inevitably come to a head.

A Board member offered to share a list of public libraries in Canada which have eliminated overdue fines.

A Board member stated that we have to make up that \$100,000 since the City is going to be assessing our user fees and may have a greater increase than that 3%. Another Board member agreed that we should reduce barriers to our patrons as other libraries have done, but believes we have to find the money somewhere.

Brian brought up the three budget options before the Board. These follow the City's lead in doing a multi-year budget for 2024 and 2025.

The Chair mentioned concern about custodial contracts due to firms still charging extra for COVID-related services, thus inflating the costs since 2020. Additionally, local companies are having a hard time filling positions.

The Board voiced their support for Option 3, which covers the gap in revenue from going fine free by freezing IT recovery costs.

A Board member expressed frustration that the IT costs are still an issue even though this problem was identified years ago. Brian explained that IT costs are determined by the number of computers a department has. Libraries rank high because of our large number of public PCs. IT assumes there will be project management, cyber security, and licensing costs associated with each workstation, even though our public computers carry actual costs that are far less than a typical staff computer.

A Board member asked what the chances are that we can re-negotiate that recovery fee with the City. Brian shared that the General Manager of Corporate Services understands that this issue is an ongoing matter of concern into our otherwise positive relationship. While they appear open to the possibility, we don't have confirmation that they've affirmed it. Staff are studying other options for IT funding models. The Library freezing these costs have no impact on the tax levy. It would mean shifting these costs to other dept(s) that are not paying what they should.

The Chair offered a hopeful view that the positive relationship he has developed with the Mayor's office will support our negotiations with senior City staff.

The following motion was presented:

2023-35 K. Bowman / M. Signoretti

**THAT** the Greater Sudbury Public Library Board approve proposed 2024-2025 Operating Budget Option 3 and direct the CEO/Chief Librarian to submit the approved budget estimates to the Council of the City of Greater Sudbury.

**CARRIED**



## 8.2 Report - GSPL/CGS Operating Agreement Draft

### **Report attached**

Brian opened the floor to the Board's feedback on the draft. Hearing none, Brian requested Board approval to seek third-party legal advice prior to signoff.

The following motion was presented:

2023-36 T. Laughren / F. Cormier

**THAT** the Library Board direct the CEO/Chief Librarian to contract the services of third-party legal counsel to conduct a review of the current draft CGS/GSPL Operating Agreement and share the results of that review with the Board

**CARRIED**

## 8.3 Report - Reserve Fund Request - Valley East Library Security Camera Installation

### **Report attached**

Due to an increase of criminal activity at the Valley East library, we need a new camera surveillance system to support our police reports. The cost for such a system would be about \$10,000, which is less than the cost of damages at this branch alone. Brian is working with HARC on a joint quote so they can also improve their surveillance cameras.

A Board member asked if the damages are covered by insurance. Brian responded that since the City's deductible is \$50,000, these damages are below that threshold.

A Board member asked about licensing fees for the surveillance system. Brian answered that the City will pay that annual cost.

The following motion was presented:

2023-37 M. Lamarche / A. Sizer

**THAT** the Greater Sudbury Public Library Board authorizes funding in the amount of \$10,000 from the Library and Citizen Services Reserve Fund to install a new security camera system at the Valley East Library and Citizen Service Centre.

**CARRIED**

## **REPORTS**

### 10.1 Chair's Report (Michael Bellmore)

The Chair reported on his advocacy work in support of the New Central Library, as well as meetings and relationship building with the Mayor, who has spoken positively about the library on many

occasions.

## 10.2 CEO's Report (Brian Harding)

### **Report attached**

Brian noted Ian Woods' retirement. He served the library as interim CEO. Brian will write a letter on behalf of the Board. The Board recommended offering him a lifetime library membership.

### **Discussion**

A Board member asked why we close for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation? Brian stated that the day is now identified as a Stat holiday in the CBA. Per Stat holiday rules, if it falls on a weekend day, the library also closes on the Monday to allow workers with a Monday to Friday schedule to have a day off. However, since he believes the library has an educational role to play by sharing resources and services on the day, Brian is investigating the possibility of libraries remaining open.

## **11. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### 11.1 Report – Alternate Material Recovery Model

#### **Report attached**

This report identifies the Policy revisions required to actualize the Elimination of Overdue Fines, passed by the Board earlier in this meeting. Brian is aiming for a January 1<sup>st</sup> implementation.

## **12. CORRESPONDENCE**

N/A

## **13. OTHER BUSINESS**

### 13.1 GSPL Board Governance Committee

An email invitation to join the Governance Committee will be sent to all Board members, and the first meeting arranged at a convenient date for all members. Several By-Laws and Policies have been identified for review.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The following motion was presented:

2023-38 K. Bowman / A. Thomson

**THAT** this meeting does now adjourn. Time: 7:45 p.m.

**CARRIED**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brian Harding, CEO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Bellmore, Chair