

**MARKHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD**

**Regular Meeting**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting held on Tuesday, October 23, 2023 7:06 p.m. Virtual Meeting**

Present from Board: Ms. Margaret McGrory, Chair  
Mr. Raymond Chan, Vice-Chair  
Mr. Michael Armes  
Deputy Mayor Michael Chan  
Mr. Edward Choi  
Mr. Robin Choy  
Mr. Steve Hsu  
Councillor Ritch Lau  
Mr. Harout Manougian  
Ms. Winnie Phung  
Ms. Lisa Tomjenovic  
Ms. Jenny Tung  
Ms. Gail Vlahopoulos  
Mr. Kenneth Wightman  
Mr. Jay Xie

Present from Staff: Mrs. Catherine Biss, CEO & Secretary-Treasurer  
Ms. Andrea Cecchetto, Director, Service Excellence  
Mrs. Diane Macklin, Director, Community Engagement  
Ms. Michelle Sawh, Director, Administration  
Ms. Debbie Walker, Director, Library Strategy & Planning  
Ms. Megan Garza, Senior Manager, Organizational Transformation  
Mr. Ken Cheung, Manager Angus Glen Library  
Ms. Frieda Meyer, Manager, Aaniin Library  
Mrs. Angela Tse, Manager, Markham Village Library  
Mrs. Susan Price, Board Secretary

Delegations: Rizwana Razakazi  
Shanta Sandarason  
Khadija Cajee  
Nimisha Patel  
Ali Chatha

Guests: Mayor of the City Markham, Ex officio Board Member Mr. Frank Scarpitti  
Mr. Morgan Jones, Commissioner, Community Services

## AGENDA 2.1

### 1.0 **Call to Order/Approval of Agenda**

Ms. Margaret McGrory, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

Moved by                      Mr. Edward Choi  
Seconded by                Ms. Jenny Tung

**Resolved that the agenda be approved.**

Carried.

Delegations 1.2 moved ahead to accommodate guest speakers.

### 1.2 **Delegations**

#### **Rizwana Razakazi:**

Rizwana thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak and advised why she requested to do so, particularly the impact on her children and family of what she saw on social media. She is sensitive to what is going on in the Muslim community. The library is an extension of learning. She would like to see more inclusivity. Rizwana was disappointed in the Islamic Heritage Month (IHM) coverage in different branches and noted it was not consistent.

She would like to work with the Library moving forward and would appreciate the opportunity to having some input into the long term plan for Muslim/Islamic displays, partnerships with Muslim/Islamic community organizations, Muslim/Islamic programs and events and related promotions.

#### **Shanta Sandarason:**

Shanta expressed frustration over the procedure for attending a Library Board Meeting and finding the link for the public to attend virtually. She requested that more clarity be provided on the communication that was sent to staff and subsequently placed on social media. She advised that she was unable to find the IHM display at Angus Glen Branch. She also asked that the Councillor who was (allegedly) involved be named.

#### **Khadija Cajee:**

Khadija expressed that she was glad to hear about the regret and future actions to be taken and wanted to lend support to the CEO. She believes that no one should lose their job because of this situation.

She expressed that concerns raised were not specific to Muslim/Jewish issues but are human rights issues. She expressed that these conflicts are not just far away conflicts but impact the communities here as well. Khadija asked that we all reflect on our own biases and recognize we are all human beings no matter our affiliations.

#### **Nimisha Patel:**

Representing the concerns of the Box Grove Residents Association Nimisha said that she had seen an IHM display in a library branch. She spoke of the hurt this

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incident had caused herself and her neighbours and asked whether the email could be shared with the public and if the city would issue a statement.

### **Ali Chatha:**

Thanked the Board for allowing him to speak. He understood that the displays were removed after a Councillor brought forward concerns.

He stated that he did not understand the policy and procedures of the Library.

He said that MPL needs to make certain of its course of action and take steps to rectify issues and that the investigation should have preceded the removal of the IHM displays.

He would like to see the library move forward in good faith, working together with the community and treating this incident as a learning opportunity regarding accountability and transparency. He appreciated the apologies offered, and thanked the CEO and MPL for taking responsibility.

The Chair introduced and welcomed Ex Officio Board Member and Mayor of the City of Markham, Mr. Frank Scarpitti and asked if he wished to speak at this time. The Mayor said he would save most of his remarks until after the CEO made hers. He did want to clarify that he cannot speak for other levels of government, regarding international conflicts. The City has locally expressed condolences along with a moment of silence at a recent Council meeting. He agreed that there may have been an inconsistent approach to the displays, however there is information available and MPL is about more than books. Islamic Heritage Month has long been celebrated in the City of Markham.

### **CEO's Remarks:**

The CEO thanked each delegation for expressing their concerns and offered sincere apologies for the hurt caused to the community.

For clarification Mrs. Biss advised that residents regularly communicate with Councillors who receive hundreds of emails from residents. Councillors forward these emails to the relevant department (in this case, to the Library) and do not provide direction to City/Library staff. It is understood that the Library Board is the responsible party and that Councillors do not govern or advise.

Library administration staff learned there were concerns expressed about the Islamic Heritage Month (IHM) displays. Following our normal process, staff briefly removed the Islamic Heritage Month displays while we reviewed the concerns. After the review, the displays were returned the same day, Wednesday Oct. 11. This action was taken immediately upon direction by library administration and not in response to social media and media coverage the following week. We deeply regret the misunderstanding which resulted in miscommunication.

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We are reviewing what happened, including our protocols and procedures, so that this does not happen again. The Mayor and I, along with senior staff from the City and Library, had productive and meaningful meetings with the Islamic Centre of Markham, the Islamic Society of Markham, and the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM). We valued the perspectives of these Muslim community leaders.

We will be working with the NCCM to provide anti-Islamophobia training for Library leaders and staff. We have also appreciated members of Markham's Muslim community who have come forward offering their help in building stronger relationships.

We know there is work to do to regain the trust of our Muslim Community and we remain committed to making everyone feel welcome at our branches.

### **Mayor's Remarks:**

Mayor Scarpitti commented that it was wonderful to hear the support coming from the community and expressed his confidence in the Library CEO. He advised that the City appoints the members of the Library Board and once appointed the Board is the governing body.

The CEO has issued an apology, explained the circumstances regarding miscommunications and missteps, and committed to continuing to review the process. He is proud of the decision to reinstate all Islamic Heritage Month displays in all library branches. There will be no further statements issued by the City on this matter. The displays will be in place until the end of the month. The Councillor will not be named. Councillors pass on resident requests to staff (in this case the Library). The CEO did not interpret the Councillor's communication as a direction to the Library and its staff.

As indicated, staff will receive anti-Islamophobia training in addition to other sensitivity training they receive. There was an unfortunate miscommunication and there will be no further action. Management has taken accountability and appropriate action and it is very clear they are moving forward in a positive way.

Deputy Mayor Chan added that he appreciated the meeting and the CEO's elaboration on what has been happening. There needs to be a clear system of procedures for releasing information regarding Councillor actions which should be made clear to the public. Many Councillors have been contacted by residents on this incident. Also, there needs to be more accessible procedures established for the public to attend Board meetings.

Councillor Lau thanked the delegates for attending the meeting and reminded everyone that Markham works as a team and wants to make sure that this does not happen again.

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The Chair added her apology on behalf of the Board for the hurt to the Muslim community caused by this incident, and committed to ensuring appropriate staff training that reinforces the values contained in the Library's Equity and Inclusion position statement, one of which states "We create a welcoming environment that recognizes and celebrates the diversity of our community".

- 1.1 **Declaration of Conflict of Pecuniary Interest**  
None.

- 1.3 **Chair's Remarks**

### **CHAIR'S INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We begin today by acknowledging the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples and their commitment to stewardship of the land. We acknowledge the communities in circle. The North, West, South and Eastern directions, the Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, Anishnabeg, Seneca, Chippewa and the current treaty holders Mississaugas of the Credit peoples. We share the responsibility with the caretakers of this land to ensure the dish is never empty and to restore relationships that are based on peace, friendship and trust. We are committed to reconciliation, partnership and enhanced understanding.

Directors were asked to introduce any "guest" staff members present

Ms. McGrory, advised the Board that it has been recommended that we count votes at virtual meetings and asked Members if they are in favor of a motion to keep their hands raised until they can be tallied.

Honorarium cheque requisition forms have been issued. Please return per instructions as soon as possible and by October 27, 2023.

- 2.0 **Approval of Minutes:**  
2.1 Library Board Minutes September 26, 2023

Moved by                      Ms. Gail Vlahopoulos  
Seconded by                Ms. Jenny Tung

**Resolved that the minutes of the September 26, 2023 Library Board Meeting be confirmed.**

Carried.

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### 2.2 **Consent Agenda:**

There was a question about when members would receive media communications published between the Board package and the meeting and a comment on what should be included.

Moved by                      Mr. Kenneth Wightman  
Seconded by                Ms. Gail Vlahopoulos

**Resolved that the Consent Agenda comprising Agenda items 2.2 to 2.4.3 and the same are hereby approved as written and the CEO of the Library is hereby authorized and directed to take such action that may be necessary to give effect to the recommendations as therein contained:**

#### **2.3 Declaration of Due Diligence by the CEO**

#### **2.4 Communication and Correspondence:**

- 2.4.1** facebook.com: Text says: The Markham Library displays a photo exhibition of immigration stories. Every immigrant who moved across the ocean has his or her own story. Sholom Wargon, who organized the immigration story and photo exhibition, spent four and a half years collecting and sorting out the immigrant stories inspired by his thoughts and commitment to his late wife. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=261958613467974>
- 2.4.2** YorkRegion.com: Local indie video game studio brings artwork to life at Markham Public Library  
[https://www.yorkregion.com/things-to-do/local-indie-video-game-studio-brings-artwork-to-life-at-markham-public-library/article\\_6dc29d13-1536-56a9-aa55-5e8fffb5987f.html](https://www.yorkregion.com/things-to-do/local-indie-video-game-studio-brings-artwork-to-life-at-markham-public-library/article_6dc29d13-1536-56a9-aa55-5e8fffb5987f.html)
- 2.4.3** MarkhamReview.com: Inspiring the next generation of writers <https://markhamreview.com/inspiring-the-next-generation-of-writers/>

Carried.

### 3.0 **CEO's Highlights:**

The Chair called upon the CEO for her comments on the highlights. Mrs. Biss noted as follows:

**Markham Public Library Material and Processing Services**

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- The Agenda for General Committee on October 24, 2023 includes a report entitled “Markham Public Library Material and Processing Services”. The purpose of the report is “to obtain approval to cancel the contract and Purchase order with Library Service Centre due to pending company closure and issue new Purchase Orders for the urgently needed library materials to Library Bound Inc. and Whitehots Inc. These re-allocations of funds will help to ensure continuity of content delivery to the community. The Chair noted that the library collection represent MPL’s most popular service.

### **University and College Fair-Angus Glen Library**

- The Fair was very well attended, providing students and their families with an opportunity to interact locally with representatives from universities, colleges and technical institutes across Ontario.

There was a concern raised regarding RFID security gates. Larger books may not be scanned as returned. Staff to investigate.

Moved by                Ms. Jenny Tung  
Seconded by        Ms. Gail Vlahopoulos

**Resolved that the report entitled “CEO’s Highlight’s, October 2023” be received.**

Carried.

### 3.1 **Markham Centre Update, October, 2023**

Moved by                Mr. Harout Manougian  
Seconded by        Mr. Edward Choi

**Resolved that the Presentation entitled “Markham Centre Update, October, 2023 be deferred”.**

Carried.

Staff will send out the report prepared for this meeting in advance of the November meeting in order for the Board to review and prepare questions.

### 4.0 **Annual Monthly Policy Review**

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(To be undertaken at the January meeting)

The Chair advised Board members that they would be receiving the complete list of policies in the November Board package. This will provide the Board with an opportunity to review and bring forward comments and suggestions for changes prior to the January 2024 Meeting.

### 5.0 **Internal Monitoring Reports:**

(Compliance list of internal monitoring reports and discussion led by members)

### 5.1 **Executive Limitation: EL-2b Staff Treatment**

Deferred.

### 5.2 **Executive Limitation: EL-2j, Communication & Counsel to the Board (June 2023 to September 2023)**

(Assigned to Ms. Jenny Tung)

Ms. Tung sent an e-mail to Board members and did not receive any questions or concerns about the report. She had some clarifications herself and passed on staff responses to Members.

The report confirmed that the CEO and MPL's practices relative to MPL's Communication & Counsel to the Board (June 2023 to September 2023) comply with the requirements of EL-2j policy.

Moved by                      Ms. Jenny Tung  
Seconded by                Mr. Edward Choi

**Resolved that the report entitled "Internal Monitoring Report: Executive Limitation, EL-2j, Communication & Counsel to the Board (June 2023 to September 2023)" be received.**

Carried.

### 5.3 **Executive Limitation: EL-2c Budgeting/Forecasting**

(Assigned to Mr. Michael Armes)

Mr. Armes received no questions or concerns from Board members and was satisfied with the report as written.

There was a question about a more detailed breakdown of the collections budget, staff advised that this would be covered in Board Education at the January 2024 Board meeting. The Chair noted that collection decisions/what the Library collects is determined by staff based on the Library's collections policy and includes interests and needs of the community, data reports and customer requests.



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Moved by                      Mr. Michael Armes  
Seconded by                Mr. Ken Wightman

**Resolved that the report entitled “Internal Monitoring Report: Executive Limitation EL-2c Budgeting/Forecasting” be received.**

Carried.

### 6.0 **Ends N/A**

### 7.0 **Governance:**

#### 7.1 **OLS Update: Margaret McGrory**

Ms. McGrory advised Members that there will be an OLS Board meeting October 28, 2023 and she will report at the November Board meeting if there is any public information to share as the meetings are confidential.

### 8.0 **Ownership Linkage:**

#### 8.1 **Input from Board Members**

Mr. Manougian told the Board that he attended the Makerspace Open House at Angus Glen. It was very well attended and staff did a good job explaining applications that are available.

### 9.0 **Board Advocacy N/A**

### 10.0 **Education:**

#### 10.1 **Board Education Plan-2024**

Staff advised the Board that the Board orientation presentation material would be sent out shortly and apologized for the delay.

The 2024 Board Education Plan includes the suggestions and input from Board members at the September Board meeting.

The Fine Free Pilot Report mentioned was presented in March 2023, it will be sent out to new Board members.

Moved by                      Mr. Edward Choi  
Seconded by                Ms. Lisa Tomjenovic

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**Resolved that the report entitled “Board Education Plan 2024” be received.**

Carried.

### 10.2 **Welcome to the MPL Board Part III: The Public Library Sector in Ontario**

Moved by                      Mr. Edward Choi  
Seconded by                Ms. Jenny Tung

**Resolved that the Board Education Presentation entitled “Welcome to the MPL Board, Part III: The Public Library Sector in Ontario be deferred to November”.**

Carried.

### 11.0 **Incidental Information:**

There was some discussion on social media policy with respect to the conveyance of MPL business on social media and issues with internal communications.

Staff to review social media policy as well as policies regarding Board “Delegations”.

### 12.0 **New Business:**

Further to September 26, 2023 12.1 (MPL acquiring the domain name [markhampubliclibrary.com](http://markhampubliclibrary.com) to increase findability of MPL's website); Mr. Manougian registered the domain name himself and offered to transfer ownership to MPL. Staff to investigate next steps with IT at the City.

There was a lot of discussion about Board members having more time for discussion and how that might be possible. The Board agenda will be revised such that matters which are the responsibility of the Board (Ownership Linkage, Ends/Executive Limitations/Education) will be addressed early in the meeting.

### 13.0 **Board Evaluation:**

#### 13.1 **Questionnaire: The Conduct of the Board**

The Chair asked Board members to respond to the questionnaire as per the email instructions.

### 14.0 **In Camera Agenda (none)**

### 15.0 **Adjournment**

Moved by Mr. Edward Choi and seconded by Ms. Jenny Tung that the meeting be adjourned at 9:04 p.m.