
Minutes of the VPL Board Services, Finance & Human Resources Committee Regular Meeting held on Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at 6:50 p.m. via Zoom video call.

Present: Jennifer Chan
Zahra Hussein — Chair
Kevin Lowe
Rhonda Sherwood
Karen Spears

Management

Present: Christina de Castell — Chief Librarian
Kay Cahill — Director, Collections & Technology
Julie Iannacone — Director, Neighbourhood & Youth Services
Dawn Ibey — Director, Library Experience
Carol Nelson — Director, Planning & Communications
Balwinder Rai — Director, Human Resources

Guest: Liza Saayman — Acting President, CUPE 391
Patricia Chong — Manager, Policy & Planning

Recording

Secretary: Chrysalyn Tolentino — Executive Assistant

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Committee Chair Hussein acknowledged that our work takes place on the traditional and unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and that we are grateful to live and work here.

ADMINISTRATION:

1. Approval and Additions to the Agenda

Moved by Rhonda Sherwood

THAT the Committee approve the regular meeting agenda as received.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. Minutes

The Chief Librarian & CEO presented the draft minutes of the Regular Meeting held September 15, 2021 for approval by the Committee.

Moved by Kevin Lowe

THAT the draft minutes of the Regular Meeting held September 15, 2021 be approved as received.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

FINANCIAL

3. Q3 Financials

Julia Morrison, Director of Corporate Services & Facilities, gave an overview of the financial statements for the second quarter, ending June 30, 2021. Director Morrison noted that the Library is over budget for the year by \$98K due to revenues which are below budget and partially offset by expenditures and transfers that are below budget. She noted that the Library incrementally restored service throughout the first two quarters of 2021, in line with increased staff capacity and health guidelines. The 2021 budget was reduced by \$500K in anticipation of this restoration of service and this reduction was achieved in the first quarter. She added that the library had a hugely successful Fine Forgiveness event which contributed to lower revenues, and that with the new Provincial Health Officer orders about gatherings and events, staff will be looking at restarting events which will contribute to future revenue. She also noted that all the retroactive bargaining related rate changes have now been included. Trustee Spears sought clarification around the difference between fees and fines. Director Ibey responded that fines are overdue fines and fees are related to other borrowing services, such as subscription library cards. The Committee thanked Director Morrison for her report. Trustee Sherwood observed that the questions she had from the report had been covered by Director Morrison's remarks.

Moved by Karen Spears

THAT the Committee recommend that the Board receive the unaudited Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for the quarter ended September 30, 2021 for information.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

HUMAN RESOURCES

4. Employee Benchmark Survey Report

Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that as part of Strategic Initiative 4.2, Foster an inclusive workplace that reflects the diversity of our community, we needed to begin by gaining a better understanding of the current diversity of VPL staff and their feelings of inclusion, so that we would learn where to put attention for change. She shared that the Employee Benchmark Survey was conducted by BC Stats in conjunction with a project initiated by the City of Vancouver, and that the survey was essentially the same. Patricia Chong, Manager of Policy & Planning, presented the summary report and drew the Committee's attention to VPL staff demographics that varied significantly from Vancouver, Metro Vancouver or the Canadian population as available. She noted that all 800 VPL staff were invited to take the survey, and it received a strong participation rate of 68%, higher than the City's 55% participation rate. She shared that next steps include developing a set of cross-tabulations that will provide a more detailed analysis of survey findings, and exploring the findings through qualitative research. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell thanked CUPE 391 for their support and promotion of this endeavour, which supported the strong participation rate, and for sharing the Library's goals around diversity and inclusion. CUPE 391 Acting President Liza Saayman shared that she attended the City of Vancouver equity table with the other unions and the high response rate of VPL was noted there. This was attributed to staff being provided time to complete the survey during work time, and that this was really crucial to its success. She thanked the employer for making this happen.

Committee Chair Hussein echoed her thanks to staff and the Union and congratulated staff on the 68% response rate, noting this is rarely achieved in surveys. She requested further analysis of population groups against their position in the library. Patricia responded that cross tabulations could look into demographic groups at the different levels of the organization, across roles and age groups. Board Chair Chan thanked CUPE 391 for their support and noted that she would also be very interested in analysis of diversity at leadership levels, as well as relationship between service years and characteristics. She asked how the Board will next be involved. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell responded that staff will be undertaking the additional analysis, and then staff will develop an action plan and goals, once we have clarity on gaps and priorities, and that this will come to the Board. Vice Chair Lowe noted his appreciation for the report and the high turnout, and that it is helpful to see the baseline data. He commented based on past experience that the data suggests that this is a healthy workplace and people are happy to work at VPL. He noted the timing of the survey during the pandemic, which has been a highly charged time in all aspects of life, and that while a lot of staff underwent challenging times last year, many still responded in a positive way. He suggested that while people often focus on the low

scores, it is valuable to explore and extract the positive experience, to understand what is working well in an organization and how this can be built on. He expressed that the results are quite good and VPL should be proud of this. Trustee Spears asked if there is a regular employee satisfaction survey. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell responded that VPL had conducted employee engagement surveys in prior years that were funded by the City, and that these were discontinued due to the high cost. She noted that management found the areas identified in the surveys were mostly not new. Board Chair Chan noted prior conversation about the lack Indigenous peoples in library education programs, and the need to address the gap, and asked if there is similar data that could help us understand why there is a lower number of people of visible minorities working at the Library. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell responded that she was not aware of information from library schools for this population group and this would require research. Board Chair Chan suggested whether the issues are in recruitment, retention or promotion of under-represented groups. Vice Chair Lowe asked if there are any best practices or learning about diversity and inclusion at other library systems that would benefit VPL. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that libraries across North American have this work as a priority and there is considerable knowledge sharing that VPL will benefit from. She shared that the challenge will be choosing where to begin, and staff will start by further research and analysis to identify the most significant issues, and then will develop a plan and identify priorities.

Moved by Rhonda Sherwood

THAT the Committee recommend that the Board receive report for information.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the Chair declared the Regular meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Zahra Hussein, Chair

Christina de Castell, Secretary