

VPL BOARD
Community Relations Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 18, 2021

Minutes of the VPL Board Community Relations, Planning & Development Committee Regular Meeting held on Monday, October 18, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via video call.

Present: Jennifer Chan
Kurt Heinrich – Chair
Kevin Lowe
Abeer Yusuf

Absent: Raji Mangat
Harlan Pruden

Management

Present: Christina de Castell – Chief Librarian & CEO
Kay Cahill – Director, Collections & Technology
Julie Iannacone – Director, Neighbourhood & Youth Services
Dawn Ibey – Director, Library Experience
Julia Morrison – Director, Corporate Services & Facilities
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 Heinrich acknowledged that our work takes place on the traditional and unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

ADMINISTRATION:

1. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Abeer Yusuf

THAT the Committee approve the regular meeting agenda as received.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. Minutes

The Chief Librarian presented the draft minutes of the Regular Meeting September 13, 2021 for approval by the Committee.

Moved by Jennifer Chan

THAT the draft minutes of Regular Meeting held September 13, 2021 be approved as received.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

3. City of Vancouver Equity Framework

Julie Iannacone, Director, Neighbourhood & Youth Services, presented a report which recommends that the Library Board provisionally adopt the City of Vancouver's Equity Framework which was referred to the Board by City Council and that staff adapt it for VPL and develop an action plan. Julie added that the Equity Framework provides a foundation to support and guide the work of the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan and is a step towards acknowledging and upholding the rights and dignity of all people, addressing historic and current systemic injustice, and reducing harm.

Board Chair Chan shared that she was excited to hear about the work in this area and sought clarity on the meaning of adapting the framework. Director Iannacone responded that the Equity Framework is a foundation and we would add examples that would make it more relevant for VPL staff, and that we would develop our own action plan. Board Chair Chan inquired about discussions with the Union relating to retention and promotion as there can be challenges in balancing seniority and the promotion of equity seeking groups. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that the Union shares this priority and has participated in conversations around internship, and that broader conversation has not yet happened. Acting President Liza Saayman confirmed their support of equity efforts and commented that the Union would be supportive of education for staff in this area.

Trustee Yusuf noted that a clear definition of equity is needed in the framework, noting it appears intended to address equity-denied people. She asked where hiring of diverse staff is included. Director Iannacone noted that it is part of goal 4.2, and she will review the language of the strategic implications. Committee Chair Heinrich reflected that the framework appears to be focused on race and inquired how class and income are considered. Director Iannacone and Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell provided background from the City's discussions, which considered this extensively and ultimately concluded that race and Indigeneity needed to be the priority, however, this reflection is not in the final product. In the VPL-adapted version, staff will expand on VPL's history addressing poverty and other equity-related issues such as accessibility, which is being examined in a separate City-wide Accessibility Strategy.

Committee Chair Heinrich asked for information about Council deliberations. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that staff will add a summary to the report. Board Chair Chan noted appreciation for the planned annual reporting to the Library Board. Trustee Yusuf asked for background on the work that VPL has previously undertaken related to equity. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell responded that staff will provide a summary statement and examples in the board report, and can include more substantial background with the report providing the action plan. Committee Chair Heinrich asked if action plan will require the hiring of an additional Equity resource, and Chief Librarian & CEO responded that staff will build an action plan that does not require additional resources, and that it will identify where work is recommended but additional resources would be required. After extensive discussion, the following motions were raised:

Moved by Abeer Yusuf

THAT the Committee recommend that the Board provisionally approve the City of Vancouver's Equity Framework for use at VPL;

THAT the Committee recommend that the Board direct staff to make adjustments to the framework which increase relevance to VPL; and

THAT the Committee recommend that the Board direct staff to conduct a goal setting exercise in the Focus Areas identified in the Equity Framework, identify actions and provide updates to the Board on an annual basis.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

POLICY

4. Equity and Anti-Racism Policy Considerations

Carol Nelson, Director, Planning & Communications, presented for Committee review and discussion a report to prompt discussion in order to inform a potential new policy on equity and anti-racism. Staff have identified a need for a policy that clearly expresses VPL's stance against racism and discrimination, and provides for decisive responses to incidents of racism within the VPL environment. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell provided an example of a recent incident and how the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan supported the conversation.

Board Chair Chan noted that she is supportive of a new policy when staff identify a gap. She sought clarification on how the new policy relates to the Equity Framework. She noted that having a clear statement on anti-racism is important but at the same time, having a standalone policy that does not apply an intersectional lens could expose VPL to criticism. Vice Chair Lowe shared support for a policy, and asked that staff look at the intersectional issues such as income, race, gender etc. He reflected on the potential scope of the policy and the impact it could have on other policies.. Trustee Yusuf expressed support for the efforts and reiterated

the need to consider the scope and inter-relationships. She noted that the needs in this area are changing and expressed concern about the likely need for frequent updates.

Committee Chair Heinrich asked about the scope of the problem for staff and how a new policy would improve the situation for staff. He noted the potential value of the four year review cycle in the Strategic Plan for these types of issues, and the challenge of whether to be narrow or broad in scope. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell acknowledged the Board's concerns about the changing climate and needs that would make policy challenging, and that VPL generally tries to put emphasis on action. Director Iannacone addressed Committee Chair Heinrich's inquiry about how to best support staff, noting that staff interacting with the public are likely best served by training rather than policy.

Committee Chair Heinrich noted that there is interest in proceeding with an update with the current Diversity & Inclusion policy and an interest to think about developing this in a comprehensive way by expanding the scope of the policy to include racism and other issues related to equity, diversity and inclusion.

Moved by Jennifer Chan

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

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURN

Moved by Abeer Yusuf

THAT here being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m. and moved to in camera

Kurt Heinrich, Chair

Christina de Castell, Secretary