

# VPL BOARD

## Regular Meeting Minutes

### Wednesday, February 22, 2023

---

Minutes of the VPL Board Meeting held on Wednesday, February 22, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. at the Level 8 Morris J. Wosk Boardroom, 350 West Georgia St., Vancouver, BC.

**Present:** Tim Bottomer  
 Victor Huang  
 Kevin Lowe — Chair  
 Melody Ma  
 Raji Mangat — Vice Chair  
 Clr. Peter Meiszner — Vancouver City Councillor  
 Harlan Pruden  
 Karen Spears  
 Ziming Yang  
 Abeer Yusuf

**Absent:** Emily Lapper

#### Management

**Present:** Christina de Castell — Chief Librarian & CEO  
 Maryn Ashdown — Director, Neighbourhood & Youth Services  
 Kay Cahill — Director, information Technology & Collections  
 Dawn Ibey — Director, Central Library & Public Service  
 Julia Morrison — Director, Corporate Services & CFO  
 Carol Nelson — Director, Planning & Communication  
 Balwinder Rai — Director, Human Resources

**Staff:** Janet Horne — Senior Manager, Library Systems  
 Inness Campbell — Manager, Collections & Technical Services

**Guests:** Victoria Jung — Chair, Vancouver Board of Education  
 Gary Jarvis — Executive Steward, CUPE Local 391  
 Jenny Marsh — Executive Director, VPL Foundation

#### Recording

**Secretary:** Chrysalyn Tolentino — Executive Assistant

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Land Acknowledgement

Board Chair Kevin Lowe acknowledged that our work takes place on the unceded and traditional homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. He

reflected on three events that happened in the past few weeks including the discovery of unmarked graves in a former residential school in Port Alberni; the return of a totem pole from the Royal B.C. Museum to the Nuxalk Nation; and the Women’s Memorial March in Honour of Missing and Murdered Women, Girls, Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA People which took place on February 14. Trustee Pruden added that the book “Stolen from Our Embrace: The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities,” published in the 1990s, talked about the unmarked graves in Port Alberni, and he reflected that we must stop this violence and murder, and that one day we will have conversations about missing Indigenous peoples that includes both women and men.

## **2. 2023 VPL Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence – Les George**

Erin Watkins, Manager of Programming & Learning, introduced Les George as the 2023 VPL Indigenous Storyteller-in-Residence. Les is a member of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and is the grandson of the late Tsleil-Waututh Chief Dan George. He is also connected through family to the Squamish and Musqueam Nations. Les George worked as a First Nations support worker with at-risk youth and those with special needs—sharing stories, drumming, songs and restorative justice circles. Les noted that he is grateful for this opportunity and shared his story. His inaugural event is scheduled on March 9 and he invited trustees to attend. Trustees commented on his words and asked questions. Les ended his presentation with a drum song.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **3. Consent Agenda - Removal of Items and Approval**

Moved by Tim Bottomer and seconded by Clr. Peter Meiszner

*THAT the following Board reports be approved on consent:*

- Draft Minutes – February 15, 2023 SFHR Committee Regular Meeting  
*THAT the Board receive the draft minutes for information.*
- Challenging Older and Classic Titles in VPL Collections  
*THAT the Board receive the report for information.*
- Q4 2022 Financials  
*THAT the Board receive the report for information.*

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

### **3. Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by Raji Mangat and seconded by Karen Spears

*THAT the Board approve the regular meeting agenda as received.*

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

#### 4. Minutes

The draft minutes of the Regular Meeting held January 25, 2023 were presented to the Board for approval.

Moved by Raji Mangat and seconded by Harlan Pruden

*THAT the draft minutes of the Regular Meeting held January 25, 2023 be approved as amended.*

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

#### REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

##### ➤ Vancouver School Board

Vancouver School Board Chair Victoria Jung shared three topics:

- That a District Education Plan was created for the years leading to 2026.
- That an Anti-Racism Action Plan launched in January 2023. The Ministry of Education will provide training for all staff and students to understand bias.
- A new Childcare Policy will outline a commitment to continue to work with nonprofit childcare and to expand childcare.

Trustee Ma asked if there is a relationship between VPL and the VSB with regards to childcare and early childhood education. Director Ashdown replied that VPL has many shared interests with VSB especially in early learning and that VPL and VSB staff sit on various tables that discuss shared topics and that staff work with nonprofit providers that rent spaces in schools. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that we have a report a few years ago that provides an overview of the relationship between VPL and VSB and staff will provide this to trustees.

##### ➤ CUPE 391

Gary Jarvis, Executive Steward of CUPE Local 391 noted that CUPE BC is also working on childcare. Gary introduced himself noting that he has been in this role for over a year and his role is advocacy and outreach to membership.

##### ➤ Friends of VPL

Board Chair Lowe read Darius Maze's email providing an update on Friends including seeing strong sales at Book'mark that exceed pre-COVID revenues. Contributing to their sales is the new VPL tote bag and they appreciate the support and partnership with VPL on this product. The Friends are planning for a spring book sale, dates to be announced. They will be holding their Annual General Meeting on May 27 and a volunteer appreciation brunch on April 15. Board Chair Lowe encouraged trustees to participate in the AGM and become

members of the Friends. Trustee Yusuf added that the Friends are looking for book donations.

➤ **VPL Foundation**

Jenny Marsh, Executive Director of the VPL Foundation shared that Book'mark is also selling the INK magazine produced by VPL that shares young people's creative work. She added that the VPL Foundation and Friends are collaborating on their next fundraising appeal and working on streamlining the message on what each organization does. The VPL Foundation nominations committee is looking at expanding their board to diversify their membership. She asked trustees to recommend anybody who they think will be a great fit for the Foundation. She added that the Children's Library Revitalization Project is coming soon and the Foundation is looking forward to capital campaign fundraising. She invited trustees to consider attending the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual International Public Library Fundraising Conference in Austin, Texas in early June.

**ITEM FOR DECISION**

**5. VPL Trustee Appointments**

Board Chair Lowe thanked trustees for indicating which committee and liaison roles they would like. He presented a report recommending appointments for the Public Library InterLINK, Friends of VPL, VPL Foundation and VPL Trust for 2023. Trustee Huang asked if there is supposed to be an alternate for the VPL Trust. Board Chair Lowe responded that the VPL Trust meets once a year at a time based on members' availability, and Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell clarified that this position is elected by the VPL Trust, so the Board's appointment is a recommendation that will be confirmed through election.

Moved by Harlan Pruden and seconded by Abeer Yusuf

*THAT the Board appoint Karen Spears as representative to the Public Library InterLINK Board for a term of one year;*

*THAT the Board appoint Tim Bottomer as backup representative to the Public Library InterLINK Board for a term of one year;*

*THAT the Board appoint Abeer Yusuf as representative to the Friends of VPL Board for a term of one year;*

*THAT the Board appoint Emily Lapper as backup representative to the Friends of VPL Board for a term of one year;*

*THAT the Board appoint Raji Mangat as representative to the VPL Foundation Board for a term of one year;*

*THAT the Board appoint Kevin Lowe as backup representative to the VPL Foundation Board for a term of one year; and*

*THAT the Board appoint Victor Huang as representative to the VPL Trust for a term of two years.*

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

## **ITEM FOR INFORMATION**

### **6. Strategic Plan Report – Q4 2022**

Carol Nelson, Director of Planning & Communication provided an overview of the year end key metrics that show progress made on the priorities and goals outlined in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. VPL has added new metrics for more qualitative goals around belonging and connection as well as relations with Indigenous peoples and community and it is gratifying to see how we are progressing.

Trustee Ma asked if the active cardholder numbers have increased year over year. Director Nelson responded that the active card holders is up by 15% compared to 2021 but it is not at the 2019 level. We are increasing slightly year over year and regaining in terms of people coming back to the Library. Director Ibey added that we are hopeful that the Library becoming fine free will encourage more people to come back. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell noted that there are multiple ways of defining what active means, and trustees may see variations in reporting depending on whether a library is using active in the last year or active in the last three years.

Trustee Bottomer asked if the 2019 data includes people that were only using our WiFi. Director Nelson responded that this was the case, and that in 2020 we stopped requiring a library card to use WiFi. Chief Librarian & CEO added that there are many people who use the space and WiFi without a card now. Director Nelson also noted that in a typical year we issue around 60K-75K new cards but do not see that level of growth in the active card holders.

Vice Chair Mangat observed that we are seeing different use of the Library, and this will need to layer into our understanding of active use moving forward. Director Nelson agreed that this is why we are looking at evolving our metrics.

Trustee Pruden asked for more information around wired internet minutes used. Director Nelson answered that this reflects the number of hours that are used on the public computers. She noted that we are offering 83% of the computers we offered in 2019, and that we will start to look at the utilization rate as opposed to capturing the duration. Trustee Pruden asked if there is an alternate way that we can measure how many people use our WiFi. Director Nelson noted that this does not appear to be possible if we want to provide WiFi without barriers. In the absence of measures, we will be exploring how much

is being used by measuring our bandwidth usage, and we are talking with other libraries on how they measure WiFi. Trustee Pruden followed with a question about how we measure belonging and connection. Director Nelson responded that we worked with an external consultant to establish outcome measures, based on Board feedback, and reviewed the process. She noted these are some of the questions asked for the first time in the public survey conducted at the end of November. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell reminded trustees that staff did a presentation on the public survey results last month and staff can send that presentation to trustees.

*<Vice Chair Mangat left at 6:58 pm>*

Trustee Yang noted that there are really good metrics around belonging and connection and asked if there are metrics on other strategic areas. Director Nelson noted that this will be discussed in depth at the March 1<sup>st</sup> Strategic Plan orientation.

Trustee Ma noted that the subscriber rate for the newsletter of 4.1% seems low relative to the active cardholders and asked if there is a reason why this is low and how we plan to increase. Chief Librarian & CEO shared that people do not tend to opt-in and this is necessary under provincial legislation.

Board Chair Lowe noted that we did use the cardholder data for fundraising. He asked whether there is anything that is significantly different at VPL from other libraries. Director Nelson shared that we have a good relationship with other urban public libraries across Canada and we have been trading metrics. Chief Librarian & CEO added that for COVID recovery, foot traffic and collection use, it is very similar with major urban libraries across Canada. Where we don't see the same patterns is with some suburban libraries where visits and collection use went up during COVID, likely because people were not commuting to downtown.

Trustee Huang asked if the Strategic Plan is ending in 2023. Chief Librarian & CEO de Castell responded that the Plan goes to the end of 2025, and that the Board extended this due to COVID.

Trustee Ma noted that everything is down in 2022 compared to 2019 and she asked what are some ways to increase our metrics in 2023. Director Nelson shared that a session will be held with directors and managers to look at trends and opportunities. Chief Librarian & CEO added that programs re-started halfway through last year, and Children's programming is now in full force, but there are some services that will not recover, such physical circulation and wired internet use. She noted people are not using our public computers as much since they have their own devices or they have internet at home, and we don't need those numbers to come back. It has been our desire over time to have our wired computer use either be stable or decline, as it indicates a lessening of the digital divide. Part of our conversation needs to be our goals for these metrics.

Board Chair Lowe noted that trustees will have opportunities to ask more questions during the Strategic Plan orientation on March 1 and asked trustees to attend.

Moved by Ziming Yang and seconded by Melody Ma

*THAT the Board receive the report for information.*

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**ADJOURN**

Moved by Tim Bottomer and seconded by Clr. Peter Meiszner

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

---

Kevin Lowe, Chair

---

Christina de Castell, Secretary