



## NOTL PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

Last motion 24-03

### 1. Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library Board was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

**Present:** Ilze Andzans, Benoit Beausoleil (remote), Katie Desharnais, Susan Elliot, Robin Foster (Remote), Daryl Novak (Chair), Wayne Scott (Vice Chair), Adriana Vizzari (Town Council Representative) (Remote)

**Staff:** Sarah Bowers (Technical Services), Debbie Krause (Community Engagement Coordinator), Cathy Simpson (CEO), Laura Tait (Manager)

**Delegates:** Matthew French, Andrew Porteus, Anthony Powell, Nicole Wiens

**Observers:** Kim Ansell, Jackie Barrett-Greene, Lisa Bowers, Sarah Burtch, Beverley Chavers, Cosmo Condina, Mo Constantine, Morgan Crosby, Olivia Draver, Kerry Goring, Patty Habermann, Mandy Moes, Joyce Robertson, Lisa Vohra, Kevin Werner, Elizabeth Yates

### 2. Approval of Agenda

**MOTION 24-04:** Moved by I. Andzans that the agenda be approved. **CARRIED.**

### 3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

### 4. Deputations

#### 4.1. Nicole Wiens

Nicole Wiens, a concerned local parent expressed discomfort with a book titled "Trans Sex" displayed prominently at the library entrance, believing it to be inappropriate for young children.

- She recounted her negative interaction with a member of library staff and her subsequent email to the library CEO expressing her concerns, from which she did not receive a response. She felt her issues were not adequately addressed.
- Nicole highlighted the need for age-appropriate materials in the children's section and questioned the decision-making process for book placement, suggesting consideration of factors like religion and politics.
- Nicole called for inclusivity in library displays, advocating for representation of diverse views and holidays while ensuring content is suitable for young audiences, and concluded by emphasizing the importance of creating a safe and welcoming environment for all library users.

#### **4.2. Matthew French**

Matthew French addressed the board as a follow up to his letter written to the editor of The Lake Report in response to Cathy Simpson's article on Freedom to Read Week.

- Matthew expressed his love for the community and the library, emphasizing its role in bringing people together and fostering common values.
- Matthew discussed the introduction of a rainbow crosswalk at the library entrance as a symbol of inclusivity but expressed concern over subsequent events that followed its installation.
- Criticism was directed towards the CEO of the library for allegedly using language associated with a controversial organization, FAIR, and passing off its statements as her own.
- Matthew provided insights into FAIR's agenda, emphasizing their narrative manipulation tactics and opposition to equity initiatives, particularly in educational settings.
- Recommendations were made for the library to reaffirm its values, address the implications of aligning with certain organizations, and focus on implementing its strategic plan to ensure alignment with community values and mission.

#### **4.3. Anthony Powell**

Tony Powell, a retired research chemist and lawyer residing in Niagara-on-the-Lake, addressed the board prompted by a letter to the editor written by Matthew French in response to Cathy Simpson's article on Freedom to Read Week.

- Powell largely agreed with Simpson's concerns about libraries limiting book selections to orthodox views and advocated for inclusion of heterodox views, emphasizing the importance of objective truth and scientific research untainted by political agendas in library decisions.
- Powell criticized the perceived internal censorship within libraries, especially regarding social issues, advocating for a liberal approach in choosing books to ensure diverse viewpoints are represented.
- He condemned French's letter for its personal attacks on Simpson and misleading statements about her and the Foundation against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR), emphasizing the importance of respectful debate and challenging ideas without personal attacks.

- Powell disagreed with French's views on orthodoxy and heterodoxy, citing historical perspective and arguing for the commendation of Simpson's courage in expressing her views while urging the library board not to be intimidated by opposing worldviews like French's.

#### **4.4. Andrew Porteus**

Andrew Porteus, with extensive experience in library management and policy writing, addressed the Board, highlighting his qualifications and background.

- He discussed the alignment between the principles of the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism (FAIR) and the Intellectual Freedom and Collection Development policies of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.
- Porteus advocated for the inclusion of heterodox information in library collections, emphasizing the importance of representing diverse viewpoints while upholding intellectual freedom policies.
- He quoted sections of the Collection Development Policy and the Intellectual Freedom Policy to support his argument, emphasizing the responsibility of library staff to provide access to diverse materials and resist censorship.
- Porteus suggested a constructive approach for the Board to revisit policies and consider partnerships with organizations aligned with the library's mission, aiming for a balanced representation of viewpoints.

#### **5. Closed Session to consider matters that qualify under the Public Libraries Act 1990: Section 16.1.4.b personal matters about an identifiable individual.**

**MOTION 24-05:** Moved by W. Scott that the Library Board proceed to closed session to consider matters that qualify under the Public Libraries Act 1990:

Section 16.1.4.b personal matters about an identifiable individual, specifically a personnel issue. **CARRIED**

The minutes of the closed meeting are recorded in a separate document titled

**NOTL Public Library Board Closed Session Minutes, Wednesday March 13, 2024**

#### **6. Closed Session Adjourned**

**MOTION 24-06:** Moved by S. Elliott that the meeting be adjourned until March 15 at 1:00 p.m. **CARRIED**

**Continuation of Closed Session March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 p.m.  
Next regular meeting April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 7:00 p.m.**