Cambridge Public Library Board Trustee Position

Purpose Statement

The Cambridge Public Library Board (hereinafter called the “Board”) is a corporation appointed by the City of Cambridge under and acting in accordance with the Public Libraries Act, Revised Statutes of Ontario, 1990 Chapter P.44 (hereinafter called the “Act”) including any amendments made to the Act.

The Board’s Powers and Responsibilities

The Board has the authority to act as a governing body to oversee the purpose, plans and policies of the organization; individual board members have no authority to act on their own.

The Board’s powers and responsibilities are as follows:

1. Establish policies that govern the operations of the library.
2. Appoint a Chief Executive Officer (hereinafter called the “CEO”) who will have general supervision over and direction of the operations of the library and staff.
3. Evaluate the CEO’s performance.
4. Approve and monitor plans of the library such as its Strategic Plan.
5. Monitor the finances of the library to ensure ethical and sound financial operations.
6. Assess relevant information regarding library service for the community.
7. Endorse service priorities and advocate for appropriate funding to achieve service priorities.

Required Qualifications

As per the Act, the person appointed to the Board must be:

- A Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada;
- At least 18 years old;
- A resident of Cambridge; and
- Not employed by the Board or the Municipality.

Code of Conduct

Trustees are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct for Local Boards and Advisory Committees of the City of Cambridge and with all CPL policies.

Trustee Individual Roles

CPL requires a well-rounded Board with competent, experienced trustees. The trustee's role requires the ability to work collaboratively towards a vision and to think in broad, future-oriented terms. This requires understanding and discussing the philosophical aspects of library service while implementing the necessary governance measures to support staff to achieve desired services. A good trustee keeps the overall vision, purpose and values of the organization in mind while governing strategically.

Essential Competencies

- Conviction that the organization's commitment to intellectual freedom is essential for a democratic society and uniquely important to the life of all Cambridge residents.
- Commitment to accessibility.
- Commitment to providing a workplace that is free of harassment, discrimination, and violence.
- Commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace.
- Commitment to fulfilling and understanding the gravity of the obligation of a trustee to duty of care by make decisions that are in the best interest of CPL, regardless of personal opinions and interests.
- Knowledge of the community's economic and social conditions.
- Ability to actively participate in discussion, approach problems with an open mind, listen to opposing viewpoints and make reasoned decisions in order to attain positive outcomes.
- Experience with governance and strategic planning.
- Leadership and/or governance experience.
- Aptitude for reviewing financial reports or budgets.
- Willingness to build knowledge; and commit to devote time and energy to the work of the Board.

Time Commitment

- As per the Act, the Board holds a minimum of 7 regular meetings a year, scheduled on Wednesdays and starting at 4:45p.m. Typically, no meetings are held in January, May, July, August and October, unless it becomes necessary for the board to call a special meeting to address a time-sensitive matter. To fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities, board meeting run 1.5-3 hours.
- The time commitment also includes:
    - preparation time to read and consider reports and other information in the meeting package prior to the meeting, approximately 2 hours.
    - Board members represent CPL in the community, and may also be asked to attend community events on behalf of the Board.

- Additional time commitments may include:
    - Board members may also elect to serve in roles voted on at its first meeting (e.g., Board Chair), volunteer to participate on the standing Board Legacy Committee or on other "ad hoc" committees of the Board as established (e.g., CEO hiring committee).

Compensation

As per the Act, trustees are not compensated in performing their duties related to board or committee meetings, including travel or preparation. However, Board members may be reimbursed for travel and other expenses incurred while conducting Board approved business, such as attending an Ontario Public Library Board Assembly meeting.

Ontario Library Services and the Public Libraries Act: 10 things to know as a perspective board member

1. **Public Library Service is FREE in Ontario.** The Public Libraries Act (PLA) and Regulation 976 specify that most library services must be offered to residents free of charge. This requirement makes the library different from other community services, which are often expected to generate revenue from user fees. Access to library service must remain free because universal access to information is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of Canadian democracy.

2. **The Board is a governing board that gets its authority from the Libraries Act.** As appointed by municipal council, the library board is a separate, independent corporation with the legal duty to provide "a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the community's unique needs" (PLA, 20a).

3. **The Board exercises is authority by making informed decisions that focus on governance, not operations.** The Board is responsible for:
    - Employer obligations through policy
    - Policy development that informs its operations
    - Financial stewardship
    - Planning strategy oversight and advocacy

4. **As employer of library staff, the library board is required by legislation to appoint a chief executive officer (CEO) to oversee library operations.** Once appointed by the Board, the CEO manages library operations, freeing the library board to focus on governance. This is an important distinction for everyone to understand as it supports healthy board and CEO relationships and avoids confusion regarding roles and duties.

5. **Board authority belongs to the board as a whole; individual board members have no authority.** The board exercises its authority through the collective decisions it makes, and records as motions, in the context of a legally constituted board meeting. Board members must abide by those decisions made at board meetings.

6. **Each board member has a legal obligation to act honestly, in good faith, and in the best interests of the library.** Because the PLA establishes the library board as a corporation, it means board members have a fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of the corporation. There is a duty of care and of loyalty, and an obligation to act honestly and in good faith. This includes all board members, whether appointed as a citizen representative or a council representative.

7. **Library board meetings must be open to the public with advance notice given.** The board is required to hold seven regular meetings over the course of a year. Board meetings must be open to the public unless a closed meeting is warranted, as prescribed in section 16.1 (4) of the Public Libraries Act.

8. **Good governance happens when the CEO and library board trust each other, respect each other, and work together.** The library board relies on the support and expertise of the CEO to be successful; and the CEO relies on the support and guidance of the library board to be successful.

9. **Good governance happens in board meetings that are designed to support informed decision-making.** The board chair and CEO work together to create agendas that are engaging and forward-thinking while also meeting the board's needs for accountability and wise stewardship. It's a process that takes time, but the best boards eventually find a collaborative style that balances camaraderie with candor and challenging conversations.

10. **The municipality is the library's primary funder and a strategic ally.** While the library board is an independent corporation, it receives most of its funding from municipal tax dollars. Sustaining a collaborative mindset and a strong working relationship between the library and the municipality is, therefore, important work. Council representatives on the library board support this work by facilitating ongoing communication and opportunities for collaboration with the municipality.