

Southern Ontario Library Service
Virtual Trustee Council meeting
Saturday, April 18, 2020

Note that because of the number of people on the line, everyone has been muted except the SOLS staff and presenters. These are the comments, questions and suggestions added through the chat.

All of the materials for this meeting are posted in the “Boards and Trustees” section of the SOLS website under the heading of “Trustee Councils” (<https://www.sols.org/index.php/trustee-council-meetings>). At this page, you will find the agenda, presentation slides, a link to the document called “[9 Tips for Board Decision-Making During COVID-19](#)”, and a link to the updates from the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) and the Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA).

If you have additional questions, feel free to

- email: consulting@sols.org
- view materials in the Governance HUB: <https://www2.librarygovernance.ca/gov-hub#four>
- read the SOLS Blog: <https://www.sols.org/blog/>

Municipal-Board Relationships

Conversations between the library staff & board members and the municipal/county staff & elected officials are important at any time. Such relationships are especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, if the Library CEO is part of the emergency response team for the community. One example of a written agreement to cover this relationship is found in the Town of Blue Mountains.

- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town of Blue Mountains Public Library and the Town is posted within the Professional Resources pages - under [Municipal Environment](#) at http://resources.learnhq.ca/ld.php?content_id=34741024

Staffing questions

As time goes on, the library might find itself in the position of having a shortage of work for some library staff. Each decision is a local decision with some making a commitment to keep all staff on the payroll, some keeping only some staff to cover specific roles (e.g. administration, online reference, online programming, website work).

Is it a decision of the board or the CEO?

- Such decisions depend on the local situation. In some cases, the Board may make a general decision (e.g. to find efficiencies) and then leave the details to the library CEO while at other libraries, the Library CEO may have been given the power to make such decisions about the workforce. Libraries are encouraged to check the library’s HR policies and/or collective agreements; to use the municipal HR staff and then if needed, get legal advice.

At some point can you clarify the difference between Declared Emergency Leave and Layoffs?

- The link to Declared Emergency is part of the Employment Standards Act and found at:- <https://www.ontario.ca/document/employment-standard-act-policy-and-interpretation-manual/part-xiv-leaves-absence#section-18>

Follow-up Webinar: Ben Hendriks, President of the Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA) has made a commitment for OLBA to host a follow-up webinar related to HR/staffing issues. Partnering with the Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service-North, the plan is to have a lawyer on the line to talk about some of the HR/staffing issues related to COVID-19. As the issue is a time-sensitive one, you will receive notification of this webinar quite soon.

Virtual Meetings

Is there a legislated advance notice requirement? Is it anywhere in your information online about exactly how much advanced notice needs to be given? What is the advance notice requirement/how many days/or is it up to our discretion?

- The *Public Libraries Act* does not specify a period of time for advance notice of a meeting, just that the meetings must be open to the public. The notice period may already be in your board by-laws, for example, that notice of a regular meeting of the library board shall be made at least 5 days in advance of the meeting. The key is that public should have enough time to make a decision about whether they wish to attend that specific meeting.

How do you go into a closed session from the open session?

- With a virtual meeting, moving from an open session to a closed meeting would be similar to the process used for in-person meetings. There must be a motion to go into a closed session– and once that motion is made, any public in attendance would be asked to leave the meeting. In the virtual world, the public would be asked to leave the call. For this reason, it is helpful to have a closed session at the end of the regular meeting or to have a separate closed meeting where the public does not come into the call.
- One participant suggested that when using Zoom, the board might use the functionality of the “breakout room” for the closed session to limit those in the “breakout room” to board members only and then to return to the regular Zoom call once the closed session of the meeting is over.

Where do mtg notices need to be posted

- Details about the posting of the meeting notices has not changed. Most libraries list meeting dates and locations on the library website as well as the library itself. With the physical locations closed, obviously notice of meetings would be limited to online methods at this time.
- Rather than posting the meeting “location”, you may wish to provide a contact number so that anyone who wishes to be part of the meeting of the library board can obtain the specific details on participating (e.g. Zoom link, conference call line, Teams Meeting link, etc.)

Rurally, internet is sketchy. What if we can't meet under these conditions and can't get the number of Board meetings in the year?

- Virtual meetings can also be conducted by conference call, as this method allows callers to be identified during the meeting. On the other hand, the recent changes to the Public Libraries Act dictate a minimum of seven (7) meetings per year and it may be that the board members wish to postpone the meetings until the ability to meet in person is returned.

Should you record the Open meetings?

- If you regularly record your library board meetings, then recording the virtual meeting can also be done. However, it was noted that “if you record, it is then available through Freedom of Information (FOI) in MFIPPA.

Voting? “You stress all members vote. That's always been my understanding, but it's against Council rules for our Councillor to vote”

- According to the *Public Libraries Act*, all appointed members of the library board have voting rights. Section 16 (6) Voting - (6) The chair or acting chair of a board may vote with the other members of the board upon all questions, and any question on which there is an equality of votes shall be deemed to be negative. R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44, s. 16 (6).

Comments from Stephen Abram, of the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries

The FOPL OpenMediaDesk Facebook Page is here and all welcome to join. It is at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FederationofOntarioPublicLibraries/>

Oshawa PL asked the official “Ontario Stop the Spread” hotline that gives policy direction on the COVID rules. Here are some useful answers:

- OPL partners with ComputerWise to allow OPL staff to come into the Imagine Space to use our laser cutters to assist the partner? It is at your discretion. So long as you are not serving public and that you have access to the facility, you can have staff member or whomever, use the machine for that purpose.
- Can (a few) OPL employees enter branches to pick up Chromebooks to distribute via community partners to vulnerable residents who need technology for health/education purposes? same as above. At your discretion.
- BROADER QUESTION: can we look at alternative service models such as curbside pickup of library materials? (can we operate our business in ways that respect distancing and other guidelines?) No, essential services are outlined on Gov’t site and libraries are not one. OPL cannot curbside or provide service to HB customers.
- Can we do what school boards are doing re aiming wifi or boosting wifi to allow people to drive up and use from outside. At our discretion

Yesterday's News Release does not apply to public libraries: Read more here: <http://fopl.ca/news/ontario-takes-further-action-to-protect-vulnerable-people-from-covid-19-province-makes-it-easier-to-reassign-staff-where-they-are-needed-most/>

Ontario Takes Further Action to Protect Vulnerable People from COVID-19: Province makes it easier to reassign staff where they are needed most

Post-COVID

- A Roadmap Imagined: Scenario Planning for Post-COVID-19 Ontario Public Libraries <http://fopl.ca/news/a-roadmap-imagined-scenario-planning-for-post-covid-19-ontario-public-libraries/>
- To the question “Are boards adjusting budgets as they go or waiting to see where it all lands?”, Stephen commented “Ensure that you insist that budget changes are temporary and point to your impact data. This isn't a new \$\$ normal. Maybe consider implementing the [Valuing Northern Libraries](#) impact Tool Kit during the shutdown.
- To the question of funding - Put some Board thinking into shovel-ready money for any special funding coming out. Think small ... like renovations, green issues, and AODA compliance. This can get small local construction companies back to work.