

Western Counties Regional Library

Board Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2026

The regular quarterly meeting of the Western Counties Regional Library Board was held on Thursday, March 19, 2026 in the Community Room of the Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Library building in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Some members attended virtually via Zoom.

Present:

Councillor Sherry Thorburn Irvine, Board Chair, Municipality of Shelburne.

Councillor George Manzer, Municipality of Digby.

Mayor Clay Kenney, Town of Clark's Harbour.

Deputy Mayor Elizabeth Acker, Town of Shelburne.

Councillor Belle Hatfield, Town of Yarmouth.

Clifford Hood, Yarmouth Public Library & Museum.

Erin Comeau, Secretary – Treasurer.

Present via Zoom:

Councillor Amy MacKinnon, Municipality of Barrington.

Regrets:

Councillor Kathy Bourque, Municipality of Argyle.

Councillor William McCormick, Town of Digby.

Councillor Réanne Evans, Municipality of Clare.

Absent:

Councillor Phil Mooney, Municipality of Yarmouth.

Councillor Candace Malik, Town of Lockeport.

1. Call to Order.

The Chair, Sherry Thorburn Irvine, calls the meeting to order at 1:01 pm. and welcomes everyone present at the meeting and online via Zoom.

2. Adoption of the Agenda.

There being no additions to the agenda, Belle Hatfield moves and George Manzer seconds the adoption of the agenda. Motion carried.

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest.

None.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

The minutes of the December 11, 2025 board meeting are circulated. Belle Hatfield moves and Clay Kenney seconds the approval of the December 11, 2025 board meeting minutes. Motion carried.

5. Business arising from the minutes.

4.1 Guidelines for Naming of Buildings.

Erin notes that this item is postponed until the fiscal year 2026-2027 and that it will be added to the 2026-2027 Management Activities.

6. Chair's Report.

Sherry reports that regions are struggling just as we are to maintain library services, with some struggling more than others. She wishes to acknowledge the staff at WCRL for their excellent work. She also appreciates all the board members and the work they do. In 2026-2027, WCRL will receive the same core library funding that it has received for the last seven years. It will not receive the bridge funding that was given previous years to support wage increases. Still, the WCRL Board's priority remains the same: to secure long-term sustainable funding for library services across the region and the province.

7. Director's Report.

Erin reports that she normally presents a written update on Management Activities but was unable to because of unforeseen circumstances that caused her to be absent for a

few weeks prior to the meeting. Activities of note since the December board meeting include:

- Hiring MNP to manage bookkeeping as of April 1, 2026.
- Managing bookkeeping with Shannon Raynard, Deputy Director and preparing year-end reports for White Perkins Associates.
- Managing outstanding project grants and submitting year-end reports.
- Overseeing the design for the new library in Pubnico. The construction started in March.
- Training Breanne Muise, our new Community Outreach Manager, as she takes over some public relations manager duties and settles into her new position.
- Preparing 2026-2027 Operating Budget scenarios.

Discussion on Director's Report:

Belle Hatfield reports that the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities is working on advocacy for public libraries in Nova Scotia. There is a discussion on how municipalities are responsible for the library buildings in the region with the exception of the McKay Memorial Library and the Yarmouth Public Library and Museum. The town and municipality in Shelburne contribute financially to the McKay Memorial Library's building and maintenance costs. Erin states that it is important for the Province of Nova Scotia to understand how much the municipalities and towns pay to operate and maintain the library buildings across the province.

8. Approval of the Financial Statement.

The February 28, 2026 Trial Balance report was presented. Elizabeth Acker moves and Belle Hatfield seconds to accept the February 28, 2026 Financial Statement as submitted. Motion carried.

9. Audit, Risk and Finance Committee Chair's Meeting Report

In the absence of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee Chair, Sherry Thorburn Irvine gives a report on the committee's budget meeting that was held on March 11, 2026.

10. Budget Recommendations.

In reviewing the board generated revenues, Erin recommends that the Adopt-A-Book campaign be postponed for the year. Management is not in a position to manage a large campaign in the absence of a campaign manager (formerly the Public Relations Manager). Erin also points out that funds from the library's reserve accounts will be required to balance the budget. A discussion is held on hiring a third party for large fundraising campaigns. This discussion will resume at a later date. The Audit, Risk and Finance Committee will be reviewing WCRL's fundraising strategy as part of the service review. Some positions remain vacant while they are being reviewed.

At 1:45 pm, Elizabeth Acker moves and Belle Hatfield seconds that the Board go in-camera.

At 1:56 pm, the Board resumes the regular board meeting.

Elizabeth Acker moves and Clifford Hood seconds to accept the 2026-2027 Budget as presented. Motion carried.

11. New Business.

9.1 Communications re: future of WCRL

Erin will prepare draft communications to align with the timeline for stakeholder consultations. She hopes that stakeholder consultations surrounding the future of library services will begin in September 2026. She will email all staff later today to inform them that the budget has been approved and that all employees will remain in their current positions at their current stated hours for the year. She hopes this will relieve some of the stress they feel in response to some of the stories about regions struggling to maintain library services. Board members may want to share this information along with the future plans for stakeholder consultation with their councils.

9.2 Stakeholder consultation and decisions on future of WCRL

Erin recommends that a consultant be hired by June so that consultations may begin after the summer holidays. She recommends that she request a proposal from Davis

Pier Consulting, who has worked on a number of library projects in recent years and would be up-to-date with the current state of the library.

It is moved by Elizabeth Acker and seconded by Clifford Hood that WCRL engage a consulting firm to undertake a comprehensive community consultation and service model analysis to guide the evolution of library service for the region and inform a future strategic plan. Motion carried.

12. In-Camera.

This item was carried out in # 10 above.

13. Other.

No other

14. Around the Table.

Clifford Hood reports that YPL&M has awarded a contract to replace the walkway to the library. YPL&M, with Erin's help, applied for an accessibility grant to cover some of the cost of the project.

Erin thanks both Clifford and Elizabeth for their work on the YPL&M and SLBA boards, respectively.

15. Next Meeting – proposed date.

The next quarterly board meeting date is Thursday, June 18, 2026 at 1:00 pm. This will also include the AGM as well as the AGM of the Charitable Association.

16. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourns at 2:14 pm.