Colchester-East Hants Public Library Board
Meeting Minutes
3rd Regular Meeting of 2025-26
September 23, 2025, 6:30-9:30pm

Present: Councillor Michael Perry (Chair), Councillor Michael Cooper, Councillor Norval Mitchell, Councillor Charlene Fletcher, Councillor Alison Graham, Councillor Pam Osborne, Councillor David LeBlanc

Staff: Jeff Mercer (Executive Director and Chief Librarian), Bill Morgan (Director, Collections and Technology), Jenn Atkinson (Director, Youth Services), Lesley Brann (Director, Adult Services), Tracy Spence (Human Resources Administrator)

Regrets: Melissa Feaver, Donna MacGillivrary, Nathan Little

1) Call to order
   M. Perry called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm and read the CEHPL Land Acknowledgement and People Recognition Statement.

2) Approval of Agenda:
   Added to the agenda under New Business
   Item J – Nova Scotia Nominee Program
   Item K – Finance discussion
   Discussion was led by A. Graham that the agenda have a suggested time for discussion attached to each item. M. Perry added that discussion should not be sacrificed to stay on time, and that reports are read ahead of the meeting. J. Mercer was instructed to add discussion times to items on agenda moving forward.

   The amended agenda was approved by consensus.

3) Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting

   Motion: That the minutes of the June 24, 2025 meeting be approved as circulated. MITCHELL/Cooper. Motion carried.

4) Business arising from the minutes
   a. Summary of insurance at other libraries.

   J. Mercer stated that our insurance coverage and costs are about the same as other libraries. N. Mitchell asked if volunteers are covered by the insurance; J. Mercer said he would confirm if that was the case and inform the board.

N. Mitchell asked whether cash flow would be affected. J. Mercer stated that we would be sure that we wouldn't follow a course where cash flow was adversely affected.

5) Correspondence

No correspondence received.

No new information was received from the Province regarding the library funding review.

6) Executive Director's Report

J. Mercer gave highlights from his report. P. Osborne asked why there were so many closures recently at the Stewiacke Library. J. Mercer stated it was the result of staffing levels, including inadequate number of on-call staff.

N. Mitchell asked about Cleanmark. J. Mercer stated that it can be difficult to get ahold of them. We will be speaking with the Town of Truro about going to tender for cleaning services. An example of an issue we've seen is that there is no replacement if the main cleaner doesn't come in due to illness or other absence. Personnel issues have been a continuing problem with this company.

A. Graham asked about book keeping and accounting – whether it'll be outsourced. Outsourcing will be researched during the 2-year contract with the new finance administrator. They can help with the transition should that be needed. A. Graham stated a preference for hiring local rather than outsourcing. M. Perry suggested that we can hire in other areas if there are savings in the finance department.

Motion: That the Executive Director's report be approved as presented.
MITCHELL/Osborne. Motion carried.

7) Treasurer's Report

J. Mercer stated that a second installment of bridge funding was received, and suggested that the Board write a letter to the minister thanking him for the extra funding. J. Mercer explained that the bridge funding acknowledges that libraries are under funded, and that it is to assist libraries until a final solution is reached. The bridge funding was $72,00 for CEHPL.

J. Mercer also noted that there was an error on the original budget with a formula, and that it has been corrected.

J. Mercer stated that we have spent between $14,000 and $18,000 out of reserves so far this year. He clarified that the Equipment heading covers furniture and desks, and does not cover computers or Maker lab supplies. P. Osborne asked about the Truro Relocation - Foundation fund. J. Mercer stated that it is from fund-raising prior to the move to the current Truro Library. J. Atkinson added that furniture for public use was purchased out of this fund for the move, and that furniture will need to be replaced out of this fund as it ages. J. Mercer followed up that the Truro Relocation - Start Up fund is used for staff needs in the Truro branch.

J. Mercer stated that the Stanfield reserve funds salary and related costs for one staff position at the Truro library and youth programming regionally. The amount received each year is based on interest so it can't be predicted. P. Osborne asked about 50% of the security costs coming out of the Stanfield fund; T. Spence stated that funds for security costs are transferred from the Stanfield fund to general operating once per year, after the interest has been added to the balance, and this has not yet been done yet in this fiscal year.

Motion: That the Treasurer's report be approved as presented.
OSBORNE/Mitchell. Motion carried.

8) New and Unfinished Business

a. Summer Reading Club

J. Atkinson stated that the SRC participation record was broken, and praised Lennie Wall at the Elmsdale Library for signing up every kid that entered the branch. A change included grand prizes at each library location; all branch managers appreciated the change. We also had a higher rate of kids who signed up returning to the library and participating. Performers "The Actual Wizard" and Julia Tynes toured all 5 branches, and our puppet show went to all 5 branches and both satellites. Char Brightman, who coordinates the satellites, was quite pleased about having puppet shows at those locations.

A. Graham stated how proud she is to be part of the library and congratulated Jenn on the accomplishments of the SRC - the library is a place for people to go without cost. P. Osborne restated her concern about Stewiacke's closures during prime time for students. N. Mitchell stated his appreciation for the work that Lennie is doing in Elmsdale. M. Perry stated that it's important to have the Summer Reading Club for people who may have nowhere else to go or nothing else to do during the summer.

b. Finance Administrator

Samiya Ayaz was hired as our new Finance Administrator. T. Spence will be training her when she starts. Samiya and her family have lived here for about 2 years; her interview and references were great.

c. Truro Branch Manger Positions

J. Atkinson and L. Brann are the defacto branch managers. The recommended change will promote two people who aleady know the job and perform many of the duties into the role officially. J. Atkinson and L. Brann would then be able to focus on their regional duties. This change will also create opportunities for other staff.

Motion: To have a camera session to discuss the Truro Branch Manager proposal
GRAHAM/Mitchell. Motion carried.

d. Director of Community Engagement position

J. Mercer reported that the management team will continue with the current reassignment of duties, and will present a report at the 6-month mark (March 2026) for the Board to review.

e. 75th Anniversary

A. Graham reported that $22,000 to $23,000 received (or pledged) from sponsors. More is expected to be raised on the night of the Gala, and additionally there will be a raffle and other fundraising efforts. The goal is $80,000, and we may be closer to $60,000 by the time of the Gala - the summer was slow, but we're coming along now. Jennifer Tilley is delivering as the Special Events Coordinator and was a good hire – she is very creative and is working out well. You can meet her at the Gala, where you can see her vision.

J. Mercer stated that there was a photo shoot today with some staff in costume to promote the event.

D. LeBlanc asked about tables and other elements of the event; some people are confused about what to expect at the event, and ibrary staff should be able to explain what people can expect. A. Graham replied that it's a unique event, and the first time that something quite like this has been done in Truro; it will be interactive, will have some seating and tables for people as well as the activities they will be able enjoy

N. Mitchell asked about sponsorship levels. J. Mercer reported that silver sponsorship is $3,000 to $7,499 and comes with four Gala tickets, and gold sponsorship begins at $7,500 and comes with six tickets.

f. Policies for Review

i. Service recognition policy

Staff recommended the following changes for service recognition:

- Adding a $25 gift plus a library tote bag to 5 years of employment;
- Removing the book donation clause, and adding a $50 gift, to 10 years of employment;
- Increasing the value of the gifts for all other employment anniversaries by $25 each;

Staff also recommended the following changes for retirement/resignation:

- Removing the "41 years and over" gift
- Changing "36-40 years" to "36 years and over";
- Changing the gift amounts for each length as services as follows:
  - 3-5 years: $30
  - 6-10 years: $60
  - 11-15 years: $100
  - 16-20 years: $150
  - 21-25 years: $200
  - 26-30 years: $225

- 31-35 years: $250
- 36 years and over: $300

P. Osborne asked for clarification between recognition gifts and retirement gifts and about the amounts. J. Mercer stated that the difference is between those continuing employment with the library and those leaving the organization, and the gift amounts reflect those differing circumstances.

Motion: That the Service Recognition Policy be revised as recommended.
OSBORNE/Cooper. Motion carried.

ii. Overtime Policy

Staff recommended that the statement regarding full-time employees not earning overtime on Saturday shift rotation be removed.

Motion: That the Overtime Policy be revised as recommended.
OSBORNE/Mitchell. Motion carried.

g. LBANS

J. Mercer reported that LBANS has now officially disbanded. Funds remaining were disbursed among member libraries, and CEHPL received $10,360. Staff recommend that these funds be used for staff development.

Motion: That the Service Recognition Policy be revised as recommended.
OSBORNE/Graham. Motion carried.

h. Equity Diversity Inclusion and Accessibility

J. Mercer reported that award-winning African-Nova Scotian singer-songwriter Julia Tynes was hired to perform at all our branches this summer. He also reported that new elevator signs with Braille script were installed at the Truro Library.

i. Projections on funding levels

N. Mitchell asked if the projections previously reported were still accurate – lasting 5 years if digging into reserves. J. Mercer affirmed that to be the case if we keep staffing and programs at current levels. He added that when cuts need to be made that the current view is to reduce collections first, then programs, then staff. A. Graham stated that the report is well put together, and recommended that our new finance administrator look into it and assist with projections and planning once they have settled in.
A. Graham stated that the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities have made it a priority to lobby for libraries, adding that the Minister understands the problem but it is up to Treasury Board to decide. NSFM will continue to lobby for libraries and for the recommendations in the funding review to get through.

j. Nova Scotia Nominee Program

J. Mercer reported that we have one staff member working to get their permanent residency, and they are asking for the library to support them in this process via the Nova Scotia Nominee Program. He added that the main responsibility of the library is to confirm with the provincial government that the employee has a job and to affirm the wages and other details. He further added that there is nothing in the process that states that the library would have to pay to repatriate them (e.g., airfare). P. Osborne stated that the program is worthwhile for the nominee from Ukraine. J. Mercer was instructed to provide information on the program to the Board for review.

k. Finance discussion

Motion: To move in camera, 8:30pm
MITCHELL/Osborne. Motion carried.

Motion: To move out of camera, 9:30pm
OSBORNE/Mitchell. Motion carried.

9) Member Roundtable
10) Next Meeting
November 25th, 2025
11) Adjournment

Meeting adjourned having completed the agenda, 9:30pm.