Public Library | Colchester-East Hants

Colchester-East Hants Public Library Board
Meeting Minutes
5th Regular Meeting of 2025-26
February 11, 2026, 6:30-8:30pm

Present:
Councillor Charlene Fletcher (Second Vice-Chair)
Councillor Michael Cooper
Councillor Norval Mitchell
Councillor David LeBlanc

Virtual:
Melissa Feaver
Nathan Little
Donna MacGillivray

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

Regrets:
Councillor Michael Perry (Chair)
Councillor Alison Graham
Councillor Pam Osborne

1. Call to Order

   C. Fletcher called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm and read the CEHPL Land Acknowledgement and People Recognition Statement.

2. Approval of Agenda

   Motion: That the agenda be adopted as presented.
   MITCHELL/Cooper. Motion carried.

3. Previous minutes

   Motion: That the minutes of the November 25, 2025 meeting be approved as presented.
   MITCHELL/Cooper. Motion Carried.

4. Correspondence

   No correspondence received.

5. Executive Director's Report

M. Cooper inquired about the Council of Regional Librarians' approach with the Province regarding funding. J. Mercer updated the Board on the financial situations at other regional libraries, and confirmed that CORL had a communication and advocacy strategy being implemented to engage the Province on funding issues.

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

6. Treasurer's Report

J. Mercer reported that the budget is on track, and noted the procedures/timing used by the finance office to access reserve funds. He added that a pre-audit meeting has been scheduled with the auditors so that the finance office can prepare for the upcoming audit.

N. Mitchell asked when funding would be received from Truro and Stewiacke; S. Ayaz confirmed that those funds had been received this year, but were not shown in the financial statement being reviewed as it reflected our finances as of December 31, 2025, before the funds were received.

N. Mitchell asked about the impact on the library if provincial funding remains the same. J. Mercer stated that we are budgeting for this year, and planning for future years, assuming that that will be the case – meaning we are looking to be more cost-efficient in many ways so as to have as little impact on services as possible. We have been very fortunate that grants, bequests, and the support of the Colchester-East Hants Public Library Foundation have been very helpful in alleviating the funding situation.

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

7. Unfinished Business

   a. Status of funds donated for holiday gift cards for staff
      J. Mercer updated the Board that a donation was given in 2023, and those funds were used to establish the Staff Recognition reserve (which supports the holiday gift cards) and to purchase a 3-year Press Reader subscription. He added that there is still a significant amount of money remaining in the Staff Recognition reserve.

   b. Policy review
      i. Civic Leave Policy
         M. Feaver conducted a jurisdictional scan, which indicated that most libraries only follow Federal guidelines and do not have a policy on leave for Municipal elections.

         Action: M. Feaver to send in information from the jurisdictional scan for use in the Civic Leave policy.

ii. Respectful Workplace Policy
This policy remains in draft and tabled until the existing policy from P. Osborne can be reviewed.

c. CEHPL's 75th Anniversary – Final Report
J. Mercer answered questions from the Board about the level of staff satisfaction with the new vehicle (staff are very satisfied) and our success in selling the old vehicle (it was sold very quickly via private sale, for a very good price; funds from the sale will be placed into reserve for future needs).

8. New Business
   a. Policies for Review
      i. Pregnancy and Parental Leave Policy
      J. Mercer noted that parts of the policy are now out of date due to changes in NS Labour Standards. Staff recommend removing the sections of the policy that directly quote NS Labour Standards and are thus redundant, as this will allow the policy to maintain compliance with NS Labour Standards as they change. N. Little recommended adding wording to clarify that if there should be a difference between NS Labour Standards and library policy, the Library will defer to the NS Labour Standards.

      Action: N. Little to send in suggested wording for a clause as noted above.

      Action: Staff to revise policy to include wording from N. Little and bring back to Board for review.

      ii. Unpaid Leave Policy
      Staff did not recommend any changes. Board consensus accepted the staff recommendation.

   b. EDIA
   J. Mercer reported that staff attended the Municipality of Colchester's flag raising ceremony for African Heritage Month. He reported that Truro Adult Services has taken on a volunteer through NSCC's lifeskills program. He also reported that the library hosted a regional virtual author visit with Monique Gray Smith, an award-winning author of Cree and Scottish heritage. He further reported the staff attended the Gender-Sexuality Alliance Conference for CCRCE at Truro Middle School, and visited the GSA group at South Colchester Academy. J. Mercer added that staff met with Tamara Tynes Powell, Program Administration Officer for the Northern Region of African Nova Scotian Affairs, to discuss possible ideas for the 2026-27 fiscal year. He continued that the library hosted a Family Literacy Day program in partnership with the Colchester Adult learning Association - joining us for the celebration were Theresa Meuse, a Mi'kmaw author/educator/cultural knowledge sharer; representatives from the Centre Communautaire francophone de Truro; and Lorraine Saulnier-MacPherson. J. Mercer also reported that the library continues to offer Sensory Storytime once a month on Saturday mornings; this program is intended to support children with autism or sensory processing challenges.

9. Members Round Table:

D. LeBlanc – Provided wrapping paper in December to help Stewiacke with book wrapping. Stewiacke council will be discussing options for the future of the library and Town Hall building.
N. Mitchell – Dropped in to speak with staff at the Elmsdale library; things are going well but funding is a concern for all. An African heritage flag was raised at the municipal building, along with other activities happening in East Hants; he also spoke of his pride in his community, including his uncle Willie O'Ree, the first Black player in the NHL. East Hants is currently in budget deliberations, and both he and Councillor Michael Perry will be bringing up the financial issues facing libraries.
D. MacGillivray - As the Chair of the Foundation, she is looking to meet with J. Mercer to talk about a permanent home for the Foundation files. The Foundation are organizing the files and will be moving them to the library. All is going well on the fundraising side. Also, various things happening for African Heritage Month in the community. This month has also seen the passing of a very well known and loved member of the community. Donna joined Norval with the history of her hockey playing family.
M. Feaver - Still with her current organization, but has changed roles. She is looking to put her house up for sale and moving closer to Truro.
N. Little – Work has been busy, with an ever-expanding portfolio. He is curious if the library has explored AI at all.
M. Cooper - The County have recognized African Heritage Month, but it's still early in the month. He was not aware of the issues in Stewiacke and talked with D. LeBlanc about potential meetings going forward.
T. Spence - The T4's are out and now we're ramping up for year's end and budgeting.
J. Mercer - We have a few cool events happening at the library, including Rachel Reid and CBC for Canada Reads. The outside world is noticing us and we're doing good things. D. LeBlanc wondered if we needed a policy for document retention, for things like grants, leases, etc.
L. Brann - Rachel Reid!
J. Atkinson - March Break is coming up. We're excited to host 6 Day Zoo at all the branches and Satellites. Also, Maritime Marionettes will be performing at the library!
B. Morgan - Mobile printing can be done from laptops or cellphones; it's been very well received. We are also wrapping up a shipping trial to see how competitive options are compared to Canada Post.
S. Ayaz - Going to be 5 months since she joined us. Time has been flying. It's been a good learning experience and people have been super kind. We are working on the budget and audit, and everything is going very well.

10. Next Meeting

The next CEHPL Board meeting will be held on April 28, 2026.

11. Adjournment

Motion: That the meeting be adjourned at 8:00pm.
MITCHELL/Little. Motion carried.