Colchester-East Hants Public Library Board
Meeting Minutes
1st Regular Meeting of 2026-27
April 28, 2026, 6:30-8:30pm

Present:
Councillor Alison Graham
Councillor Michael Cooper
Councillor Norval Mitchell

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), Tracy Spence (Human Resources Administrator) and Samiya Ayaz (Finance Administrator).

Regrets:
Councillor Michael Perry (Chair)
Councillor Pam Osborne (1st Vice-Chair)
Councillor Charlene Fletcher (2nd Vice-Chair)
Councillor David LeBlanc

1. Call to Order

   A. Graham (Treasurer) called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm; B. Morgan 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 February 11, 2026 meeting be approved as presented.
   COOPER/Mitchell. Motion Carried.

4. Correspondence

   There were 6 letters from other libraries in the regions, either to Government or as a press release, regarding changes in hours or staffing due to financial restraints. M. Cooper advised he would like us to send one as well. The general consensus was that there is no harm and it would show we are concerned as well. NSFM starts soon and it would be good to have the letter ready.

   Action: J. Mercer will draft a letter by April 29, 2026, for approval by the board via email.

5. Executive Director's Report

   M. Cooper asked about page 3, paragraph 4. "I met with an individual who has interest in a second career in the library world and in supporting libraries in our area." J. Mercer advised this person offered to assist and advise the Foundation on ways to collect donations. They worked in this field for many years. A. Graham put a caution forward of not trying to fund ourselves, it is the governments responsibility, and if we can raise money ourselves, then the government may feel they don't need to contribute or could contribute less.

   M. Cooper asked about the new behavioural issues that were mentioned under Branches and Staff. J. Mercer explained that the problem is with patrons not following the Library's code of conduct; for example bag lunches are given out to persons in need, and they bring them to the library to eat but do not clean up after themselves. This is also common with the teens (pizza has been found in the furniture). The new behaviour specified is the pushback staff received from the adults when advised to clean up, and where those individuals were eating and making messes. Regarding the teens, they were presented with a garbage can and told to put their garbage in it, which they then did.

   N. Mitchell asked if there was any feed back from the branches? J. Mercer advised that the branches report that there is support for services, communications between branches and with management staff are good, and initiatives to streamline work processes for staff have been welcomed and successful.

   A. Graham voiced her displeasure about MLA Scott Armstrong's announcement being made at the library; it was noted that it felt insincere, that the government is using libraries to make provincial announcements given their lack of financial support for libraries. Also, it was tone deaf, as there were no women in the pictures; it sent the wrong message and was disappointing.

A. Graham asked about the van wrap. J. Mercer advised that one design came back, but staff felt there was room for improvement. He added that a new design should be in place before summer and that there will be a launch with board members and donors.

M. Cooper wondered if any information about the Stewiacke library building had come out. J. Mercer advised that the Town of Stewiacke Council has been considering options, but he has not received correspondence on a definitive direction.

N. Mitchell asked for an update on digital subscriptions in the face of budget concerns; J. Mercer confirmed that the monthly download limit per patron for Hoopla has been reduced from 5 to 3, and the Library has reduced the yearly spending on the service, due to funding constraints.

A. Graham had thoughts that the library does so much for the government, like community services and vaccine clinics, and right now they get room rentals for free. They should be charged for library space. D. MacGillivray mentioned that when the government needs something, they go to the library. They ask the library to do more and more; if they would have to rent a room anywhere else, they would have to pay, so why not charge them here? M. Feaver thought we should review the room rental policy. N. Little asked is it the Province of Nova Scotia, or all government? D. MacGillivray suggested that the funding agreement be reviewed regarding the province renting library space; are there clauses that would prevent this? Discussion was held about whether this should be applied to government announcements only or to other government uses of library space, and parameters will need to be put in place regarding what would warrant payment. M. Cooper advised writing a letter giving notice to government that due to financial restrains we would need to start charging for some services, should the Library move forward with fees for government use of library space.

Action: Board and staff to give this more thought.

Motion: That s**taff review the funding agreement, and bring to the Board options for library space rental fees and parameters regarding government use of library space GRAHAM/Cooper. Motion Carried.**

N. Mitchell advised there is discussion of Stewiacke amalgamating with the county; M. Cooper said that there are discussions in the community.

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

6. Treasurer's Report

General Operating:
J. Mercer reported that the budget is looking good. The draft budget being presented at this meeting is to show the Board where current pressure points are and the direction being taken to mitigate those pressures. Highlights for the financial statements at end of March 2026 included: interest at around $22,000.00, and the sale of the old van for $16,000.00.

For budgets moving forward, we will have a line representing the Grace Brown bequest, and a line representing the unspent funds from the Period Poverty grant received several years previously.

Once the audit is complete, we will know what our surplus situation will be, and recommendations for dispersal of surplus funds to reserves will be made following CEHPL protocols.

Reserves:
J. Mercer presented an overview of current reserve fund balances. Highlights included: Staff Development has a healthy balance, but it would be good to move more into it; Vehicles is also at a good level, and we will not need to add to that for some time.

N. Mitchell ask about Staff Development; J. Mercer advised that training such as first aid, conference attendance, and Employee Development Day come out of this fund.

J. Mercer noted that there is $31,000.00 in a reserve to refresh collections in Truro, and that some of it will be used this coming fiscal year. N. Mitchell asked if those funds could be used to replace worn out books in addition to buying new ones, and J. Mercer confirmed that that was indeed the case.

Stanfield:
Discussion was held regarding interest payments.

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

7. Unfinished Business

    a. Policy Review:
        i. Pregnancy and Parental Leave Policy. Final updates to wording were made as requested.

    b. Policy review

i. Civic Leave Policy

M. Feaver conducted a jurisdictional scan, finding no mention of leave for municipal elections across Canada in policies or manuals. It was noted that municipal elections are not for two years, giving staff time to research and draft a policy revision for Board review.

c. Respectful Workplace Policy

This policy remains in draft and tabled until the existing policy from P. Osborne can be reviewed. CEHPL has a Workplace Violence Policy, and related clauses in our Occupational Health and Safety Policy; these may be the existing policies to be reviewed.

N. Little asked a question about statutory requirements, to which J. Mercer and J. Atkinson replied and confirmed with details.

Action: J. Mercer will reach out to P. Osborne to discuss previous policies.

Action: Staff will bring a policy for review and approval by the Board in June.

Motion: To accept the revisions to the Pregnancy Parental Leave Policy as presented. GRAHAM/Mitchell. Motion Carried.

8. New Business

a. Policies for Review

i. Visa Policy:

ii. Board directed to provide, accountability section, J. Mercer Jeff or designate is responsible. Jeff to approve larger purchases and designates to approve smaller amounts. If someone resigns what will happen?

Action: Need to add to policy, "The Treasurer will review all transactions listed on the Visa statement following payment for final sign off."

DCE position**:** The Annual report is overdue. Staff members are learning how to run the web events calendar from B. Morgan. J. Atkinson was in charge of Employee Development Day, and reported that it wasn't a big problem and we used grant funding for the day. L. Brann advised that many duties had returned to the way they had been previously, particularly for employees such as herself with longer employment history at CEHPL.

9. EDIA

Saint Mary's University - Black Threads: 20 people attended the event.
Lindsay Ruck, had an author reading.
Kim Caine, 3-dimensional pop-up image of Africville, using watercolour and acrylic paints.

Pride programing is coming up and then October is Mi'kmaq history month. Received Youth Service summer reading program paraformers one in the summer and one in the fall. Tata and elms. Morgan Tony and Keith, 2 hours in Truro one hour workshop and one hour performance. A. Graham asked, can we promote to target the local communities?
Yes, Millbrook going to library services next month, and they will be advised.

D. MacGillivray is thankful for the African Nova Scotia and Mi'kmaq celebration. We can never do enough to promote and understanding.

10. Members Round Table

M. Cooper: Not much
J. Atkinson: March Break was a grand success, with 35 programs and 1730 participants; the 6 Day Zoo was wildly popular, reaching capacity at 3 locations (Elmsdale, Stewiacke, Kennetcook)!
N. Mitchell: Went to Elmsdale talked to staff, concerned funding, dungeon and dragons' game was held there. At Sipekne'katik in July there will be an athletics day, open to the public.
B. Morgan: DCE working on training the staff on the web calendar.
L. Brann: Heated Rivalry program was terrific, with 109 people attending. The 2nd floor was limited for the day to that event. Program Lead Megan Cameron handled everything magnificently, including logistics, dealing with the publicist, accommodating press requests from Global tv, Saltscape magazine and others, and conducting the on-stage interview! Also, the new tables are here, the ones they replaced went to the Patterson Room. Stewiacke took the older tables.
A. Graham: Remind and harass the government about funding and equity, make it a priority. Always top of mind.
S. Ayaz: Audit process next week. May 14-15.
T. Spence: Preparing payroll reports for the up-coming audit and just became a Nana.
M. Feaver: Everyone sick, 2nd week new job. Business and round table, planning events and trying to get people involved.
N. Little: No new job, and not sick; sister had another son!
D. MacGillivray: New role with NS Friendship, Inclusion and Separation. Sad news for the African Nova Scotian community - Truro lost Aunt Eddie, who was almost 98. Born in Truro

and lived in Truro. I wish we had set up a fireside chat at the library with her and other elders in the community. Planning underway for provincial effort to get black high school students to work in government. Colchester newcomers group: Have funding for director, a plan to combat racism, and is a welcoming network. The same support is not there for historical communities.

J. Mercer: Thank you to the Staff, Business Office and RMT for assistance with the budget; staff are really stepping up in all aspects, I give credit to them all. I am now the Atlantic Canadian representative on the board of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations.

11. Next Meeting

    The next CEHPL Board meeting will be held on June 24, 2026, following the 2025-26 Annual General Meeting.

12. Adjournment

    Meeting adjourned having completed the agenda, 8:12pm.