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Library Board Report

To: Newmarket Public Library Board

From: Todd Kyle, C.E.O.

Date: June 17, 2020

RE: **Recovery and Re-opening Considerations for Library**

Background:

While the library has been closed to all but online services since March 14, 2020, staff have been working to develop plans in order to be prepared for changes to the Ontario government's emergency orders that will allow phased re-opening and re-introduction of services. This report will outline steps taken so far, including confirmation of decisions taken under emergency authority approved by the Board on April 2, 2020, as well as a high-level overview of future contingencies and guiding principles for further phases of recovery.

Discussion:

Emergency decisions taken since April 2, 2020: Curbside Pickup (Stage 1)

After Board decisions about the disposition of Library staff during the closure, the Ontario government authorized a "curbside pickup" model of service for public libraries as of May 19, 2020. Staff then prepared a plan for this service, using community and staff safety as its prime priority. This plan was reviewed by the library's Joint Health and Safety Committee, our CUPE bargaining unit, Town of Newmarket Human Resources, and by members of the Library Board via e-mail. Under the CEO's authority to make decisions on Library service operations, and with the agreement of the Library Board Executive, the plan was put into affect as of June 3, 2020, with the first service being offered on June 6.

In short, curbside pickup has been introduced as a walk-up model two days per week, which may be extended depending on need and continued staff safety. Library patrons place holds for desired material online or by phone, and staff are assigned on these days to "pick" these materials from the shelves, check them in to trigger a notification e-mail, then check them out and bag them for pickup. Patrons approach the library doors one at a time, indicate their name, and staff retrieve their bag, placing it for pickup while at all time maintaining a distance of 2 metres from the patron. At all times, staff maintain physical distancing, practice appropriate hygiene and cleaning protocols, wear Personal Protective Equipment as needed, and minimize

the number of people handling each patron's materials as much as possible. This adds layers of complexity to the operation and slows it down. Guidance as to best practices on how to operate such a service has come from the Ontario government's COVID-specific Health and Safety guidelines and from the Southern Ontario Library Service.

At the same time, the CEO's emergency decisions included a limited reintroduction of staff into the library workplace. Previously, only essential tasks related to building systems, Information Technology, and financial services were typically reasons for staff to attend the workplace. For curbside service, teams of 7 staff at a time including managers, are arranged in such a way as to limit overlap between teams and limit each staff member's time in the building. In addition, decisions are currently being made to allow staff to attend on the remaining weekdays in order to restore some services related to receiving and processing of new library books and other material. There will potentially also be some staff attending the workplace to conduct some online programming which has proven difficult to sustain in a home context.

Emergency decisions have also included some purchases of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff; these are being tracked using a unique accounting code in the event of reimbursement of COVID-related expenses by other levels of government. Finally, a decision was made to continue both extending due dates and not assessing overdue fines for all materials borrowed since just prior to the shutdown. For the time being, the message to users has simply been to return items when you are finished with them.

Future decisions: Limited Library Re-opening (Stage 2)

On June 8, 2020, the Ontario government announced further re-openings as part of a "Stage 2" including public libraries, as of June 12. However, as of the date of this report, this does not yet include a number of regions, mainly in the Greater Toronto Area, including York Region. Staff have begun working on a plan to introduce limited service as per Stage 2 so as to be ready for when this is extended to York.

This model will include only limited services of the library, continuing a pickup service for reserved items but adding public computer use and information and browsing assistance provided by staff. Staff stationed at the entrance would allow a limited number of patrons in for limited times and only for approved services, and monitor their time spent in order to make space for other patrons. The existing reservation system for public computers would be leveraged in order to fairly distribute capacity, and computer workstations would be spread apart as much as possible. Patrons wishing information, technology, or browsing assistance would approach a reference desk where staff behind a shield would discuss their needs and retrieve a selection of items for the patron from the shelves if needed. The items would be placed on a designated counter and those items the patron does not select would be placed into 72-hour quarantine. No group programming, meeting rooms, study space, shelf browsing, or other casual activity would be provided or allowed.

As with the curbside phase, review of this plan by all concerned parties would take place, and has already begun with Town of Newmarket Human Resources health and safety staff. In

addition, new guidelines for library employers for safe delivery of services during Stage 2 have been posted by the Ontario government and will be followed. One of these mandates continuing to limit the number of staff in the library at a given time. It is NPL's intention to continue to have staff mainly attending the workplace for rotating public duties and working from home when not, and doing so in two distinct teams so as to maintain a separation in the event of a staff infection.

Some considerations in this phase may need Board guidance. These include:

- Employment status of those Library staff currently on Declared Emergency Leave (discussion can be held in Closed Session if needed)
- Opening hours of the library
- Limit of number of patrons in the library at a time
- Status of the current fine-free arrangement for all borrowers

It is recommended that the Board give general guidance on the plans and considerations above, and that any further significant decisions with budgetary, policy, or strategic implications be made by the Executive Committee as contingencies occur, with decisions being ratified at a Board meeting within one month, as per the report on Emergency Delegation of Authority. In addition, it is recommended that the C.E.O. be authorized to continue to make emergency COVID-related purchases, with a future report coming to the Board on budget implications if significant.

Conclusion:

The following motions are recommended:

THAT the Library Board receive the report on Recovery and Re-opening Considerations for the Library;

AND THAT the Library Board ratify the decisions and continued emergency authority as outlined in the report.

Appendix: Emergency Authorities as approved by the Board April 2, 2020

Executive Committee

Decisions of the Executive Committee may be made without constituting a formal public meeting. They are subject to ratification at the next regular board meeting. If a regular board meeting cannot be held due to the emergency situation, a special meeting must be legally constituted within one month of any Executive Committee decision, or failing that, as soon as is practically possible.

Decisions of the Executive Committee are those that are necessitated by unusual circumstances and that are budgetary, strategic, or fundamental to the Library's status or operations. These include, but are not limited to:

- Extended closure decisions. The existing Policy on Inclement Weather, or Other Emergencies Causing Closure of the Library gives all closure decision authority to the C.E.O. but questions of continued staff payment beyond the first day are referred to the Board. As these two are inextricably linked, it may be necessary to amend this policy going forward. At this point it is most prudent to seek Executive authorization for extended closures.
- Continued employment parameters for staff (see above)
- Extraordinary expenditures outside of approved budgets
- Any Capital Budget expenditure
- Deployment of staff outside of Library functions

Chief Executive Officer

Decisions that may be made by the C.E.O. independently are those that are operational in nature and that may be required for business continuity. These include, but are not limited to:

- Services and activities of the Library to cancel and those to continue
- Expenditures within approved budgets, subject to guidance from the Director of Finance
- Deployment of staff within Library functions
- Emergency communications with the public, subject to any Service Level Agreement with Town of Newmarket Corporate Communications
- Monthly bank balance transfer
- Any other decision required to ensure continued operation of essential activities of the Library

In addition to the above, any other decisions made at this meeting by the Board, including the labour relations items in Closed Session, will be considered to be final and therefore not subject to the ratification provisions as above. Only decisions made the the Executive subsequent to this meeting, as circumstances change, will be subject to future ratification.