

Hybrid Format for In-Person Board Meetings

Date:	February 28, 2022
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

This report outlines how Toronto Public Library (TPL) board meetings will be conducted when the Board returns to in-person meetings at the Toronto Reference Library.

TPL will return to in-person board meetings once Provincial restrictions and Toronto Public Health guidelines allow it to do so safely, and following the timeline and practice of Toronto City Council and its Committees. At that time, TPL board meetings will be conducted in a hybrid model, where some or all members of the board, library staff, guests and members of the public can attend and/or participate in the meeting either in person (in the boardroom at the Toronto Reference Library or by tele/video conference.

A hybrid model will:

- promote health and safety, and give the Library Board the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances in the city during and after the COVID-19 emergency;
- increase accessibility and attendance at TPL board meetings, contributing to good governance, transparency and accountability; and
- ensure TPL's board meetings are in compliance with TPL's Board Procedural By-Law and consistent with meeting rules and practices for City Council, its Committees and its local boards.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are one-time set-up costs and ongoing operational savings to transition to hybrid board meetings:

- The one-time cost to upgrade the boardroom was \$106,746 and this was funded from the 2021 capital budget. This technologically-complex work was done by RAVE Audio Visual who had done previous work on the Boardroom as well as the Appel Salon.
- Current monthly costs to run virtual meetings using an external vendor costs \$2,000 per meeting. When the Board transitions to hybrid meetings, this cost will be eliminated as these activities will be transitioned to TPL staff.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

By providing for hybrid access to and participation in TPL board meetings, the library is fulfilling several commitments it makes in its Strategic Plan (2020-2024) *Vital to Toronto – Building Success, Resilience and Well Being for our City*: To “create and animate accessible, inclusive spaces (Strategic Priority #1); to “empower everyone to engage in civic life” (Strategic Priority #4); and to “continue to be transparent and accountable to Torontonians” (Evaluation & Accountability Strategic Plan Enabler).

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Hybrid board meetings will promote equity and inclusion by increasing accessibility to TPL board meetings and ensuring that more members of the public can access and participate in the Board’s decision-making process. Barriers to participation including cost of travel, mobility, and physical space constraints are reduced or eliminated by allowing for both in-person and virtual participation in TPL board meetings.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In September 2020, TPL revised its Procedural By-Law to allow the Board, at the discretion of the Chair of the Toronto Public Library Board, to hold a regular or special meeting or committee meeting where some or all Board Members participate by tele/video conference. Board Members participating in the meeting by tele/video

conference are considered present under the By-law. This change extends the current provisions for tele/video conference participation beyond the COVID-19 emergency, giving the Library Board the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances in the city during and after the COVID-19 emergency and is consistent with electronic meeting rules for City Council and its local boards.

The City of Toronto, City Clerk's Office has indicated that meetings of Council will likely continue to have a video component as well as an in-person component. In-person attendance by the public will be dependent on how and when City buildings open to the public.

COMMENTS

TPL will return to in-person board meetings once Provincial restrictions and Toronto Public Health guidelines allow it to do so safely, and following the timeline and practice of Toronto City Council and its Committees. TPL board meetings will be conducted in a hybrid model, where some or all members of the board, library staff, guests and members of the public can attend and/or participate in the meeting either in person (in the boardroom at the Toronto Reference Library) or by tele/video conference.

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Hybrid meeting logistics and capabilities

New technology to support hybrid meetings has been installed in the boardroom. This includes video telepresence technology, A/V control systems and wireless microphones. TPL A/V and event coordination staff have been trained to support the technical production of board meeting, including the WebEx functions previously supported through an external vendor; however, for the first few meetings, external vendor support will be available to support TPL staff.

Hybrid meetings will be open to the public via streaming, as well as in person, with the exception of closed portions of the meeting. Presenters will be offered the option to participate by WebEx Audio or in person, and closed captioning will continue to be

provided. Going forward, recordings of board meeting proceedings will also be made available on the TPL website, following each board meeting. TPL's website will be updated for privacy purposes to make it clear that board meeting proceedings are now recorded and will be posted publicly. In keeping with the Board's Procedural By-Law, approved board or committee meeting minutes will be the official record of meetings.

Considerations when pandemic-related health & safety restrictions are in effect

The Executive Boardroom at the Toronto Reference Library can only accommodate a maximum of 15 people when physical distancing requirements are in place. Therefore, while health and safety restrictions are in effect, only board members, the Library Board Officer, meeting support staff and the City Librarian will be able to attend in person. All other participants (e.g. TPL Directors, guests, members of the public) will be required to attend and/or participate in the meeting virtually.

All in-person attendees will be required to follow all Provincial and Toronto Public Health protocols in place for library spaces, including screening, masking, physical distancing, capacity limits, hand hygiene and any other COVID health and safety restrictions or requirements.

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SIGNATURE

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