



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: June 10, 2019  
Author: Christina de Castell, Chief Librarian  
Phone No.: 604-331-4007  
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Meeting Date: June 26, 2019

TO: VPL Board

FROM: Jennifer Chan, Chair, Governance Committee

**SUBJECT: Board Communications Protocol**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report recommends an update to the Board Communications Protocol to address use of VPL-provided email accounts and mobile devices.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for decision.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the Board adopt the amended VPL Board Policy: *Board Communications Protocol*.

### **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

The Governance Committee discussed the policy and identified additional revisions to clarify the scope and correct references to the Board Procedure Policy at its meeting on April 8, 2019.

### **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

The VPL Board governs the policies and the services of the Vancouver Public Library and, as such, engages in decision-making that impacts a wide-variety of stakeholders with diverse interests. Communications standards and protocols provide the Board with a clear, transparent,

standardized mechanism for the delivery of both external organizational and strategic communications, as well as communications with the Union. The addition of protocols for the use of Board email and VPL-provided devices ensures that VPL can meet its obligations as a public body under the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA).

## **POLICY**

In addition to the Board Communication Protocol, the other relevant policies for Board members' communication are the Board Governance Principles, VPL Board Procedure Policy and Trustee Liaison Responsibilities.

## **BACKGROUND**

The *Board Communications Protocol* was introduced in November 2014, along with the Trustee Liaison Responsibilities and revisions to the VPL Board *Procedure Policy*. This broad and fairly general protocol was intended to establish clear context and guidelines for the Board for both external communications (e.g., media, community members, stakeholder organizations) and Union-initiated communications to the Board regarding VPL services or operations.

Since then, community members, community organizations, and the Union have formally communicated with the VPL Board ("the Board") through correspondence (print or email) and delegations to the Board, as per the Board Procedure Policy. A Board email address is provided on the website and community members are invited to send emails to the Board using this address. Emails sent to this address are formally filed as official correspondence with the Board. Those related to governance are provided to the Board with the monthly meeting materials, while those related to operations are addressed by staff.

Since the mid-2000s, the Union has been providing a brief news update to the Board during meetings, focused on Union activity. If they wish to provide official Union commentary on issues arising in the workplace related to labour relations, this is provided through the official delegation process. The Union is expected to communicate with the Board Chair, rather than individual trustees, so that communications can be shared with the larger Board, and reviewed by the Chief Librarian, who is responsible for the operations of the Library.

At times, individual Board members have also expressed interest in engaging with community groups as a Board member, how to enable this, and how to ensure it is open and transparent. The Board has a *Branch Liaison Role* document which outlines a framework for individual Trustees' interactions with community members. The use of a VPL email account supports transparency in these interactions.

## **DISCUSSION**

At the training provided to Board members in February 2018 on BC's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) and using VPL email, trustees identified that use of email, and specifically VPL accounts for trustees, should be included in a Board policy. The Governance Committee discussed the Board Communications Protocol on September 19, 2018 and identified that an expansion to include communication mechanisms was needed to address VPL-provided devices, to specify use of VPL email accounts, and to recognize that other communication is used, such as phone calls, as well as to identify the need for compliance with FOIPPA. The committee requested that the Chief Librarian bring amendments to a future meeting.

The proposed new section addresses the following:

- Obligation for transparency under BC FOIPPA
- Expectation to check VPL email on at least a weekly basis
- Use of personal email accounts for transitory messages requiring action, such as those related to scheduling
- Use of other communication mechanisms

The amendments also and a scope statement and update formatting based on the policy template. All new sections are highlighted.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

The Board Governance Committee has undertaken to refine Board governance processes and improve related policies. The Board Communications Protocol introduced in 2014 has been useful in providing a commonly understood framework for the communication and activities of Trustees, and clarifying expectations for use of email as a communication mechanism will provide guidance for future Board members.

## DRAFT BOARD POLICY

<b>SUBJECT: Board Communications Protocol</b>	
<b>CATEGORY: Board</b>	<b>POLICY CODE: VPL-BD-Board-L-2014</b>

### Objective

This Protocol is ~~not~~ intended to ~~act as an arbitrary restraint on communications, but rather to~~ provide the Board with a clear, standardized mechanism for the delivery of both external organizational and strategic communications, as well as communications with the Union. It is important that the Board ~~establish~~ utilize consistent communication protocols that best support the Library as an organization.

### Scope

This policy applies to all communications to, from and between members of the Vancouver Public Library Board.

### Definitions

**Official record:** required by a public body to control, support or document the delivery of services, to carry out operations, to make decisions, or to account for the activities of the library.

**Record:** includes books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, letters, vouchers, papers and any other thing on which information is recorded or stored by graphic, electronic, mechanical or other means, but does not include a computer program or any other mechanism that produces records;

**Transitory record:** records of temporary usefulness needed for a limited period of time to complete a routine task or prepare an ongoing record.

### Policy Statements

#### 1. External Communications

##### 1.1 Establishing Formal Media Contacts

It is advantageous to establish a designated media spokesperson(s) to ensure consistency of messaging as well as to develop a relationship with the media. The Board considers it a function of the Chief Librarian or appointed designate to act as the official spokesperson(s) for the Library. Contact information shall be made available on the Library's website.

##### 1.2 External Communications (Press Release, Website, Other Materials)

The development and preparation of Library communications shall be a function of Management. This includes strategic materials such as the website, news releases, corporate brochures, advertisements and other marketing materials as required. Final approval of Library communications rests with the Chief Librarian or appointed designate

### **1.3 External Communications (Public, Community, Stakeholders)**

- a) As stated above, the Chief Librarian or appointed designate shall act as the official spokesperson(s) for the Library. However, from time to time questions from the public or other stakeholders may be directed to the Board rather than to Management. It is important that Trustees inform the Chief Librarian of such communications so that proper action and accurate responses can be made by the appropriate representative of the Library.
- b) The Board may be asked to assist with communications or a Trustee may be approached directly to speak publicly about the Library. In all instances, Trustees are asked to advise the Chief Librarian of the request. The Chief Librarian is responsible for ensuring that communications activities are properly coordinated and that Trustees, where applicable, are provided with the appropriate communications assistance.
- c) In circumstances where it is appropriate for the Board rather than the Chief Librarian to communicate on behalf of the Library, such communications shall be through the Chair of the Board or their designate and not individual Trustees. The Chief Librarian will ensure the Board spokesperson has appropriate briefing notes.
- d) All contact information for the Board of Trustees will be provided through the Executive Assistant to the Board.
- e) Public communications to the Board should be conducted in writing when possible so as to create an official record.

### **1.4 Communications Administrative Function**

The Chief Librarian may designate, appoint or contract a person (or entity) to support the administrative functions relative to the execution of the Board's Communication Protocol.

## **2. Union Communications**

### **2.1 Establishing Formal Labour Relations Contacts**

The Board has delegated all authority over the operations of the Library, including Human Resources and Labour Relations, to the Chief Librarian and considers it a function of the Chief Librarian or their delegate to act as the official spokesperson(s) for the Library in relation to Labour Relations matters. The Union shall be provided with the contact information for all appropriate management members.

### **2.2 Union-Management Meetings**

The Chief Librarian shall ensure that regular meetings are scheduled and occur and shall meet with the Union President on an as-needed basis to share information and discuss matters of concern.

### **2.3 Union-Board Communication**

As stated above, the Chief Librarian or appointed designate shall act as the official spokesperson(s) for the Library in relation to Labour Relations matters. However, from time to time the Union may wish to present information to the Board directly.

- The Union may send formal correspondence to the Board as per the Board Procedure Policy, Section 2.
- The Union may seek to present a delegation to the Board at a future monthly Board meeting, as per the Board Procedure Policy, Section 2.

## **2.4 Submission of Information to the Board**

- Any operational or VPL-related information is to be presented and discussed through the proper operational Union-Management channels. The Board Chair will direct the Union to present and discuss such matters with Management before the Board will receive the information.
- Union communications to the Board via delegation should also be presented in writing so as to be officially received by the Library.

## **2.5 Union-Trustee Communication**

From time to time, Union representatives may communicate with individual Trustees regarding operational matters or matters relating to the Collective Agreement or Labour Relations. The communication may be shared with the Board or Chief Librarian if appropriate.

## **2.6 Board/Trustee – Staff Interactions**

Interactions of Board of Trustees and staff are discussed in the VPL Code of Conduct, Section 7 and the VPL Board Procedure Policy, Section Role and Responsibility of the Chief Librarian / Board – Chief Librarian Linkage.

# **3. Internal Board Communications**

Trustee decision-making takes place at regular meetings, held in-person with the option for phone-in participation when necessary. Decision-making may also occur by phone or electronic means as described in the Board Procedure policy.

The Library provides Trustees with communications mechanisms and tools for conducting Library business to assist in Library governance and to ensure that the Library is able to comply with obligations under the British Columbia *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Disseminating information and scheduling participation in activities may take place by email or phone, or through VPL-provided devices, as described below.

## **3.1 VPL email accounts**

Trustees are provided with a VPL email account for Board communication. All non-transitory email correspondence to, from, and among trustees must be conducted through these VPL.ca email accounts as it forms an official record. Trustees are expected to monitor these accounts on at least a weekly basis. Vancouver City Council, Parks Board and School Board liaison trustees are not provided with VPL email accounts, as they have public email

accounts associated with these roles that ensure the Library can meet British Columbia *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* obligations.

These VPL email accounts will be used to distribute relevant media releases, public announcements, and notices, to arrange representation of the Library at events, and to conduct decision-making outside regular meetings. These messages may form an official record of Library business, depending on their content.

Trustees' personal email accounts may be used for transitory records/messages that require immediate action, such as coordinating meeting and event attendance and logistics or notifying trustees that an urgent message has been sent to VPL accounts.

### 3.2 VPL-provided devices

Trustees are provided with individual mobile devices for the distribution of meeting materials in digital format for the duration of their term.

### 3.3 Other communication mechanisms

When necessary or appropriate, other communication mechanisms may be used.

## Policy Administration Roles and Responsibilities

<b>Chief Librarian</b>	Oversees and recommends updates to the policy as required.
<b>Governance Committee</b>	Review policy as required and recommends changes to the Board.
<b>Board</b>	Approves policy and revisions to the policy
<b>Chief Librarian</b>	Administers the policy.

## Related Policies

- Board Procedure (Board Policy)
- Board Governance Principles (Board Policy)
- Code of Conduct (Board Policy)

## Approval History

<b>ISSUED BY:</b>	Library Board	<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	Library Board	<b>DATE:</b>	2014/11/26	
<b>REVISED BY:</b>	Library Board	<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	Library Board	<b>DATE:</b>		

<b>DATE OF NEXT REVIEW</b>	2024/04/24	<b>REVIEW CYCLE</b>	5 Years	
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