

# Recruiting and Selecting Library Board Members

## A Guide for Municipal Councils

One of the many important things a municipal council can do is make appointments to its local library board. In Alberta, council appoints and unappoints library board members to municipal and intermunicipal library boards under the terms set out in the *Libraries Act* (sections 4, 5, 12.3, and 31), and the *Libraries Regulation* (section 17.1).

A municipal library board must have a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 board members. Intermunicipal library boards must have a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 10 board members.

Upon appointment, a board member becomes part of a legal entity (the library board) responsible for governing the delivery of public library service in the community and receiving local and provincial tax dollars to provide quality library service. Board members have a fiduciary responsibility to employ the duty of care – acting with competence and diligence – as well as the duty of loyalty – acting in the best interest of library service in the community.

Only the council of the municipality that established the board or signed the intermunicipal agreement can appoint to a library board. The council of a neighboring municipality cannot appoint board members to a board that they did not have a role in establishing.

However, the council of the establishing municipality(ies) can appoint individuals from neighboring municipalities to the library board, as there are no residency requirements imposed by the legislation. Having individuals from neighboring municipalities can help to strengthen relationships and bring a broader perspective to the table.

For municipal library boards, council may appoint up to two board members who are also councillors on their council (i.e., councillors of the municipality that established the library board). For intermunicipal boards, each municipality that is party to the agreement may appoint one board member who is also a councillor on their council.

- If a councillor is appointed to the library board, they have the same role and responsibilities as the other board members and should not be referred to as a “Council Rep” or something similar. There is no designated role for a municipal councillor on a municipal or intermunicipal library board.
- Councillors from neighboring municipalities may be appointed to the library board and do not count against the limit of councillors as they are not from the establishing municipality(ies).
- Council may also choose to not appoint any councillors to the library board. An employee of the library board cannot be appointed to the library board.

There is no provision for alternates to be appointed to a municipal or intermunicipal library board.

All appointments to the municipal or intermunicipal library board shall be for a term of up to three years.

A library board member is eligible to be reappointed for up to two additional consecutive terms. If

council wishes to appoint a board member for more than three terms, at least 2/3 of the whole council must pass a resolution stating that the member may be reappointed as a member for more than 3 consecutive terms. This must be done each time the member is reappointed beyond three consecutive terms.

Libraries are corporations established under the *Alberta libraries Act*. Like all corporations, boards are responsible for operating within not only the *Libraries Act* and *Regulation*, but other legislation including *Employment Standards*, *Occupational Health and Safety*, *FOIP*, and the *Copyright Act*. In addition to knowing and conforming to legislation, effective boards;

- develop a Plan of Service to establish goals and objectives for the library
- support ongoing professional development opportunities for its staff and its board members
- ensure delivery of significant programs and services that reflect the diversity of the community
- provide leadership through supporting the identification and development of emerging local programs
- measure the impact of existing community programs and provide library resources and services that will enhance community results
- present a budget to the municipal council that reflects the library's Plan of Service and identified community needs
- evaluate the performance of the library within the community and adjust its goals and objectives where needs are not being met
- ensure excellent management of the library on behalf of the community within the budget approved by the municipality
- hire the library's Chief Executive Officer and evaluate their performance within the management goals set by the Board
- ensure adherence to the *Libraries Act*, its *Regulation*, and any other legislation affecting the operation of the library within the community
- support the core value of intellectual freedom
- be able to set aside personal biases in the interests of what best serves the community in the areas of library collections, programs, and services.

Given the significant responsibilities and demands placed on library board members, potential trustees should exhibit the following characteristics. They should be:

- interested in making a difference in the future success of their community
- available to attend board and committee meetings and to come prepared to contribute to discussions and decisions
- willing to become more aware of the bigger picture by learning about public library issues and concerns at both the provincial and the national levels
- prepared to represent the interests, concerns, and attitudes of your community
- open to learning about library programs and services that give their community the level of access to information and enrichment that it needs.

- enthusiastic about working with other board members and the Chief Executive Officer in a team process designed to provide programs and services that meet the greatest number of needs in their community
- committed to being an active participant in board leadership activities in their community

When soliciting for board members, some simple steps will assist with finding suitable candidates. These include:

- Advertising vacancies
- Requiring all candidates to attend a mandatory information session
- Developing criteria for selection of candidates

Your council may also choose to establish a selection committee and develop a structured interview process.

You may also choose to consult with the exiting library Board Chair and the library manager to determine the current needs of your community and gaps which may exist in the current board composition.

The appointments to the library board shall be made on the date fixed by council. Any vacancy arising from any cause must be filled by council as soon as reasonably possible for council to do so.

When appointing board members, make sure the motion lists the name(s) of the individual(s) and includes the length of term (one, two, or three years).

Council should also send the library board a list of appointments, including the length of terms, and send a letter to each appointee with their term length and expiry date.

Effective boards provide effective library service. Good recruitment and selection now will prevent a host of troubles later.

## References:

“Choosing an Effective Public Library Board” Ontario Library Association, © Copyright 2014, Revised 2018 [2018-Choosing-an-Effective-PL-Board-Resource.pdf \(accessola.com\)](https://www.accessola.com/2018-Choosing-an-Effective-PL-Board-Resource.pdf) Accessed 1 March 2024.

“Municipal Councils and Library Boards – Roles and Responsibilities” Government of Alberta

January 11, 2022, Municipal Affairs [Municipal Councils and Library Boards: Roles and Responsibilities \(alberta.ca\)](#) Accessed 1 March 2024.