

Your Guide to Building Rapport

With Municipal Administration and Council



Resourceful By Nature

Goal:

Help Municipal Administration and Council understand the relationship between the council, municipal library board, and library system. Promoting an understanding of those different roles and educating municipal administration will go a long way toward establishing a successful rapport between the library board and council. By building a strong rapport, library boards are likely to be much more successful at obtaining adequate funding.

Steps:

1

Ideally, library boards should meet with council regularly, or at least send a report on library activities to every council meeting.

2

In addition to regular reports, boards may want to consider visiting council over the course of the year. Some good topics to present to council include:

- Review of the library's annual report on operations
- Review of the library's annual financial report (audit)
- An annual review/update of the library's plan of service
- Presentation to council of the library's budget for the upcoming year

Council meetings can be very long, so boards may only want to conduct council presentations once or twice a year. At a minimum, the board should appear before council when presenting its budget for the upcoming year.

3

If a board has done its job over the course of a year successfully, council will see the

value of the library and fund it appropriately.

Points to Consider:

1

Don't visit council only when you want something and don't make every discussion about money. Presenting your value to the community and council will make asking for money easier when the time comes.

2

Tell the council about the library's successes and what it is achieving in the community. It is okay to brag about all the amazing things you have done!

3

Show how the library is helping council achieve their goals. It is always good for library boards to examine municipal strategic plans and work to align the library's plan of service objectives with councils' whenever possible. In fact, it is useful for the library to ask directly how the library can assist the municipality. This can be asked by the board to council or by library staff to municipal staff.

4

Make sure the proper protocols are observed. Library staff should be communicating with municipal staff, and library board members should be communicating with municipal councils or councillors.

5

It is useful if a library board does some detective work and explores passions and interests of individual councilors. All of these activities can help library boards build rapport with their principal funders.

Advocating for the System

1

Always speak well of the library system and explain Shortgrass' role. If council and administration see that the library board views system membership as important, it makes it easier for the system to maintain the support of the municipal members. To augment support for the system, it is especially useful to present or reference the Return on Investment (ROI) document available on Parkland's website: Return on Investment - Parkland Regional Library System (prl.ab.ca).

There is another reason to explain the services of the system: there is always danger that councils and municipal administrators will not see a clear distinction between the two levels of library service. Not understanding the different levels of service can result in a municipal library and the system "competing" for the same pot of money allocated for library service by a municipality. Shortgrass never wants to see funding diminished at the local level to fund system services.

Additional Resources and Support

Visit the Advocacy section of Shortgrass' website: Shortgrass.ca > Services for Libraries > Advocacy Resources. Here you can find tools on crafting your message and advocating for your library.

