

INDEX

NO.	ITEM	PAGE
1.	OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY- 2025 DRAFT OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGETS OPLB-2024-1105- 11.2	TWO DELEGATIONS: THE FIRST REQUESTED A ONE-TIME \$250K INVESTMENT FROM THE LIBRARY RESERVES TO SECURE MORE RESOURCES FOR LIBRARY SERVICES IN PRIORITY NEIGHBOURHOODS ACROSS THE CITY OF OTTAWA. THE SECOND SPOKE ABOUT THE CURRENT BUDGET NOT ADDRESSING DISPARITIES IN SERVICE TO RESIDENTS WITHIN OTTAWA'S GREENBELT. APPROX. 55 MIN.-WORTH OF CONSIDERATION OF THIS ITEM (DELEGATIONS, AND Q&A TO STAFF) CARRIED AS PRESENTED

ATTACHED OPL BOARD DRAFT MINUTES EXTRACT

MEETING OF 3 DECEMBER 2024

10.1 OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY- 2025 DRAFT OPERATING AND CAPITAL
BUDGETS

Chair Luloff noted the draft budget supports the 2023-2026 Board priorities, and will help ensure that OPL remains a vital, responsive, and sustainable service for Ottawa residents now and into the future. Specifically, the budget fulfils OPL's mandatory requirements; enhances the client experience, provides staff capacity for both current needs and future growth with the current focus being on service delivery at the Central branch at Ādisōke; achieves balance among Board-approved priorities; promotes financial responsibility and stewardship; and, revises user fees in a manner that is equitable and fair to taxpayers and in accordance with cost recovery principles. He thanked staff and City colleagues for their tremendous work on this budget.

Sonia Bebbington, Chief Librarian/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Anna Basile, Deputy CEO and Division Manager, Corporate Services presented the Board with a high-level summary of the draft budget including information regarding operating pressures, the recommended 2025 capital initiatives, and feedback received during the consultation period. (*Held on file with the Chief Librarian/CEO*). Matthew Pritz, Program Manager, Finance and Business Services and Diana Adjarska-Litzanova, City of Ottawa, Financial Services were in attendance to respond to questions.

The Board heard from the following delegations. Those marked with an asterisk (*) below denote that a written submission or presentation is held on file with the Chief Librarian and CEO.

Riley Brockington, Councillor, Ward 16 (River) noted that Ottawa Public Library does phenomenal work by positively impacting lives daily. He reiterated his continued support and advocacy for access to the library and his support for the free choice of clients using library materials. Councillor Brockington noted his

work as an OPL trustee in the previous term, including advocating for access to services during pandemic recovery and securing additional resources for library services in priority neighbourhoods. He felt that more could be done across the city, specifically collaborating with working groups in areas without a local branch to identify programming and service gaps as these groups can assist in promoting, supporting, and sharing feedback about library services. Councillor Brockington suggested that the Board invest in communities across Ottawa who do not have access to OPL services. He applauded the Board's recent investments in rural communities, in the Central branch at Ādisōke, and in the construction of new suburban branches. He urged the Board to not forget those most at risk populations (including those who struggle to succeed, single-parent households, racialized populations, and communities with below average car ownership) who could most benefit from an investment. He noted that client feedback in River Ward working groups regarding current investments in programming and services in the community have consistently been well received. Councillor Brockington underlined he was not asking for the construction of a new branch, or for a ward-specific investment, rather he was asking that funds be allocated to communities across the city without library services. He felt that there were sufficient funds in the Library Reserve to support a one-time investment of \$250K in 2025. He noted that he and other Council colleagues heard during Councillor-led budget sessions that library services are important and further investment is needed. He felt that the proposed budget is serving the overall city well, but pockets within the city remain that need to be better served.

Trustee Crawford asked the delegate for details regarding his proposed \$250K investment. Councillor Brockington noted that the investment would be similar to the Board-approved motion made in the last term for community development funding, noting the proposed one-year timeline was suggested due to staff capacity.

In response to a question from Trustee Slack regarding the specific suggested use of the funds, Councillor Brockington deferred to the discretion of staff regarding the best use of funds for the priority neighbourhoods.

Trustee Slack inquired whether the Councillor was delegating at other committees or boards with similar funding requests. Councillor Brockington replied that he is appearing before the Board for additional funds for library services and Council will endorse whatever recommendation the Board approves.

Trustee Slack commented that the Board should have additional documentation and time to review before deciding. Councillor Brockington felt that his messages in the past have been consistent with his suggestion and Trustee Slack endorsed similar funding last term when they served on the Board together.

The Chair agreed that the Councillor's delegations to the Board have been consistent in the nature of the request. Given the Service Delivery Framework and the identification of equity gaps, the Chair asked, hypothetically, if an additional investment above and beyond what is budgeted for was available, would Councillor Brockington be prepared to see the investment go to neighbourhoods that rank higher than the ones he represents in River Ward. Councillor Brockington replied that he would be prepared to accept that decision; the Board and staff should allocate resources where they believe need to be greatest.

The Chair thanked the Councillor for his remarks and for being a strong voice for his community and a supporter of library services.

John D. Reid, resident of River Ward, spoke regarding equity issues affecting residents inside the city's Greenbelt. He noted that the average distance to a library branch in Ottawa is higher than in several other Canadian cities, and commented that, based on this analysis, citizens in Ottawa are not getting the

standard level of library service that is common across the country. He felt that this disparity places a substantial burden on communities with limited transportation options, particularly those with high densities of Ottawa Community Housing and co-operative housing. Mr. Reid noted it is crucial to ensure that all neighbourhoods in the city benefit from access to library services. In his opinion, resources have been allocated to the Central branch while neighbourhood branches, which he felt could serve more people directly, remain overlooked. Mr. Reid felt leveraging resources to establish smaller, community-focused branches, such as in leased locations, staffed with existing personnel would be beneficial. He urged the Board to reconsider the approval of the Facilities Framework, which he felt appears to overlook underserved areas. He felt that the Board should consider an unbiased reassessment or a professional arm's length study or audit, adding that comparing Ottawa's library performance with other cities could provide valuable insights. He added that improving transparency and equity in resource allocation will strengthen public confidence in the Board's decision-making process. He urged the Board to ensure that all residents, regardless of their postal code, have equitable access to the resources that libraries provide.

Chair Luloff clarified that the Facilities Framework Gap Analysis, released in 2023, has identified a gap in the Hunt Club-Riverside Park area. He noted that it will take some time to address these gaps as the focus will be primarily on the opening of the Central branch Ādisōke, and on high growth areas, for which there are different sources of funding. The Chair highlighted the importance of considering population density and other variables when comparing municipalities and thanked the delegate.

There being no further questions to delegations, the Board proceeded to questions of staff.

Trustee Crawford commented that the \$250K suggestion was a significant investment to consider at this time and added that she would like to learn more

about some future alternative service delivery possibilities from staff. She thanked Councillor Brockington for focusing on creative service delivery opportunities.

Ms. Bebbington also thanked Councillor Brockington for his support of library services and advocacy for his community. Applying the community development lens, and building on relationships the Councillor has supported, she noted the nearly 50 OPL early literacy programs offered in community centres in River Ward in 2024. In terms of the request for funds to support community development work, she highlighted the proposed budget efficiencies that have been leveraged to create a dedicated position supporting community development in Overbrook, located at the St-Laurent branch. She further highlighted the parallels between this investment and what the delegate was requesting. While it does not match the delegation's request for city-wide investment, it includes some of the most high-needs communities in the city. Ms. Bebbington noted that this pilot project will provide valuable lessons that will allow staff to expand and apply the community development approach more consistently across the city, in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Trustee Crawford thanked staff for the response, noting she lives in the ward in which this pilot project will be initiated, and is aware of the high needs in that community. She looked forward to the lessons learned from this project, which may be applied to similar initiatives in additional communities. Ms. Bebbington reiterated that existing offsite programming would continue in tandem with increased use of the community development lens to inform services.

Trustee Brown noted that staff are using efficiencies to fund a role for public engagement and asked staff to explain the difference in that role versus community development. Ms. Basile underscored that when OPL staff refer to public engagement, they are speaking about a specific formal engagement around strategic initiatives, which require significant resources. Ms. Basile noted the Board has received feedback in the past regarding opportunities for better

engagement (e.g. the Facilities Framework) and where the library has engaged the public very well (e.g. the Central Library project). She noted that OPL does not have internal staff capacity for this work, and have been engaging external resources, citing the current work in developing the Service Strategies. She noted upcoming public engagement needs (such as for the Riverside South and Barrhaven projects) and indicated the cost efficiency associated with dedicated internal resources.

Trustee Brown asked for an explanation of the increase in the Expenditures by Type: Transfers/Grants/Financial Charges operating category. After conferring with Financial Services colleagues, Ms. Basile confirmed that the \$1.540 million amount in this line is an internal transfer made to fund capital programs.

Chair Luloff inquired about potential funding sources for urban gap areas, noting that development charges and partnership opportunities are often available for growth areas. Ms. Basile noted the potential for infrastructure grant funding for new builds, and confirmed that historically, access to this funding is why libraries have focused on growth areas/projects. She further underscored the importance of incorporating a distance metric (of three kilometres) in the Facilities Framework, as it allowed staff to prioritize the needs of legacy gap neighbourhoods. Ms. Basile confirmed that, in line with the Framework, staff will bring forward to the Board the second part of the Asset Management Plan with a more comprehensive state of existing library assets, then develop a Facilities Master Plan that integrates both types of gaps (legacy and growth), as well as asset management needs. In response to the Chair's question, she indicated that funding sources for urban gaps can be limited, and these projects are typically funded through operating budgets. Ms. Basile noted that this is one of the reasons for cultivating a healthy Library Reserve Fund, as well as for strengthening relationships with community organizations for potential facility partnerships.

In response to a question from Chair Luloff regarding whether key community partners such as the City Recreation, Cultural, and Facility Services (RCFS) department were also addressing legacy gap areas or were focused on growth areas, Ms. Basile noted that discussions with RCFS to date have focused on growth areas, but as the Facilities Master Plan continues to be developed, the goal was to work together more holistically including reviewing existing assets.

The Chair inquired regarding other potential partners, and Ms. Basile provided the example of Ottawa Community Housing. Ms. Bebbington further noted that leased spaces, as mentioned by the second delegate, are already a model that OPL uses and continues to be an option in the future.

Trustee King inquired regarding the plan for Library Reserves, given the anticipated future pressures. Ms. Bebbington noted that the \$2M proposed withdrawal from Reserves brings the total in line with the City's Ottawa Library Reserve Fund By-law, noting that \$850K is also designated within the Reserve for future staffing needs. Ms. Basile added staff will be reporting to the Board in March 2025 regarding plans to utilize funding from the Reserves or the anticipated surplus (depending on 2024 end-of-year financials) for a replacement Bookmobile unit. Noting that this unit is scheduled for replacement in 2027, a year in which staff are expecting significant financial pressures. Ms. Basile stated that securing the funds in advance would reduce that pressure and ensure continuity of the Bookmobile service.

Trustee King inquired about other potential strategies to address future financial pressures, and Ms. Basile replied that the draft budget includes a four-year operating forecast that outlines anticipated pressures for the years 2026 to 2029. She noted that, if the budget remains steady, 2026 and 2027 will be intense years with a levelling out of pressures in 2028 and 2029. Staff continually implement smaller internal efficiencies and conduct broader service reviews as part of ongoing strategies to mitigate pressures. Trustee King thanked staff for

their forward-thinking approach in terms of capital investments and ensuring that they result in efficiencies and cost savings.

Trustee King inquired about the significant work required to train more than 50 new employees for the Central branch at Ādisōke. Ms. Basile replied that staff were developing plans for this, and added that while not yet finalized, the plan includes onboarding these positions in late 2025, approximately six months before the facility opening. This timeline allows for both typical training as well as training while working in existing OPL locations. This practice will help employees familiarize themselves both with the services OPL provides and the various communities we serve, ensuring consistency of experience and a connection to all the different neighbourhoods across the system. She added that it is expected that some of the employees in these positions may also be internal candidates.

Trustee King thanked staff for the response and reiterated his excitement for the community development project at the St-Laurent branch, and its potential to inform future initiatives across the city.

Trustee Bradley inquired whether there is a specific budget line item that supports alternative services including outreach programming delivered by branch staff. Ms. Bebbington noted it is not a separate line item: this work is supported by compensation budgets associated with Branch Services. Specifically, she added that each branch has a catchment area assigned to it which includes multiple neighbourhoods. In response, Trustee Bradley inquired whether it was difficult to make a one-time allocation of \$250K because the work is done through employees not specific services, and Ms. Bebbington confirmed in the affirmative. She further noted the importance of undertaking this work in a sustainable way, as proposed in the current draft budget, with the potential for expansion in the future.

Trustee Bradley noted that the passion and consistent messages shared by delegates to the Board and inquired whether there is a need for more services as they describe. Ms. Bebbington noted the offsite programming provided in River Ward, and the way staff are mindful to engage the community regarding their interests and needs, including for early literacy programming. She cited examples in which the type of programming was adjusted based on attendance and other community offerings and noted the strong current attendance numbers in programming in Hunt Club and Carlington specifically.

Trustee Bradley further inquired whether the needs exceeded the current program offerings, and Ms. Bebbington responded that staff seek to offer more services, and her responsibility is to ensure that resources are made available to offer programming (for example) consistently across the city. She underlined that communities in River Ward currently have more off-site programming than others with similar barriers, and additional offerings must be considered only when offsite services can be offered more consistently in high-needs neighbourhoods across the city, citing the example of the pilot at St-Laurent branch as another area with several neighbourhoods with significant needs.

Trustee Kitts commented that programs and services have been enhanced in River Ward because of significant advocacy, and if there were hypothetical dollars available, perhaps River Ward would not be first on the list to receive them, which is an important consideration.

Trustee Kitts inquired about whether distance and equity were weighted equally in the Facilities Framework criteria for allocating resources, and Ms. Basile replied that the equity lens was weighted at three times, and distance at two times.

Trustee Kitts further inquired what data was incorporated into the equity criterion, and Ms. Basile replied that this criterion draws on the Neighbourhood Equity Index for data.

Chair Luloff asked staff to expand on the potential risks of not including the other costs for the Central branch at Ādisōke in the draft 2025 budget (including the remaining FTEs and other anticipated expenditures). Ms. Bebbington replied that the proposed 2025 budget is sufficient to cover 2025 needs. Related to the Central branch, staff have undertaken strategies over several years to account for key positions, and the remaining positions can be onboarded closer to the opening of the Central branch, hence they are calendared toward the end of the 2025 fiscal year. She noted the risks of this approach are two-fold: firstly, it represents a significant intake of staff in a concentrated period. Mitigations include the fact that most of these positions are existing roles, and there is potential to both spread the steps in this process throughout the year (for example, job postings and interviews are conducted earlier in the year), and to share the onboarding work across the system. The second risk relates to the implications of the current approach for 2026, including pressures from the cost-of-living allowances, which will be approximately \$3M for the totality of OPL staff. Combined with operating requirements and ongoing capital allocations, the anticipated budget request for 2026 could be closer to \$5M. Ms. Bebbington said staff are mindful of how public money is managed and the approach taken for 2025 is prudent and follows general accounting principles.

In closing, Chair Luloff thanked staff for providing more information regarding the risks. He reiterated his trust in the support of his City colleagues for the proposed approach, noting this support is key to the successful opening of the Central branch at Ādisōke.

There being no further discussion, the OPL 2025 Draft budget was CARRIED as presented.

**DOCUMENT 3
OTTAWA PUBLIC
LIBRARY BOARD
3 DECEMBER 2024**

**DOCUMENT 33
C.A. DE LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE
PUBLIQUE D'OTTAWA
3 DÉCEMBRE 2024**

**EXTRACT OF DRAFT
MINUTES 18
OTTAWA PUBLIC
LIBRARY BOARD
11 DECEMBER 2024**

**EXTRAIT DE L'ÉBAUCHE DU
PROCÈS-VERBAL 18
C.A. DE LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE
PUBLIQUE D'OTTAWA
11 DÉCEMBRE 2024**

MOTION OPL 20241203/4

That the Ottawa Public Library Board:

- 1. Approve the 2025 Draft Budget for Ottawa Public Library, including a withdrawal of a total of \$2M from the Library Reserve Fund, and the repurposing of \$500K in existing capital orders, as further described in this report; and,**
- 2. Direct staff to forward the report to Ottawa City Council, for consideration on December 11, 2024, as part of the City Council's approval of the City of Ottawa 2025 Draft Operating and Capital budget.**

Results: Carried