



Media Release: Friday, June 13, 2014, 4:30 p.m.

Regional Municipality of Waterloo

Library Committee

Agenda

Tuesday, June 17, 2014

3:00 p.m. (Time is approximate, following Closed Committee)

Room 217

150 Frederick Street, Kitchener

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- 1. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest under “The Municipal Conflict of Interest Act”**
 - 2. Reports**
 - a) [P-LIB-14-004](#), Collection of Outstanding Accounts 1
 - 3. Information/Correspondence**
 - a) [Memo](#): Region of Waterloo Library Operations Update: April – June 2014 5
 - b) [Memo](#): Region of Waterloo Library Financial Report: January – April, 2014 8
 - 4. Other Business**
 - 5. Next Meeting – September 30, 2014**
 - 6. Adjourn**



Report: P-LIB-14-004

Region of Waterloo

Planning, Housing and Community Services

Community Services

To: Chair Todd Cowan and Members of the Library Committee

Date: June 17, 2014 **File Code:** R09-01

Subject: Collection of Outstanding Accounts

Recommendation:

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo approve the ongoing use of the services of Unique Management Services (UMS) to act as Material Recovery Agent for the Region of Waterloo Library (RWL), which includes authorizing UMS to proceed with any steps necessary for collection of the accounts, and granting UMS permission to report all unpaid accounts to national credit reporting agencies, as described in Report P-LIB-14-004, dated June 17, 2014.

Summary:

At the October 1, 2013 meeting, Library Committee approved a “free 90-day trial offered by Unique Management Service to assist in recovering long overdue library items or the associated fines and fees”.

After a detailed and thorough set up period, the 90-day trial began on April 8, 2014. As of May 31, 20 accounts had been referred to UMS, and \$316.09 in value recovered, comprised of \$246.10 in cash and \$69.90 in materials returned. UMS reports that RWL’s results are trending on average with their other customer libraries. As a result of new overdue procedures, staff time involved has been greatly reduced. On-going costs associated with UMS collection services are guaranteed to be budget-neutral for RWL, with the average return being four times the amount spent on the service.

Report:**Background**

Report P-LIB-13-004, Potential Use of Collection Agency, dated May 28, 2013 identified that 473 patrons had materials that were at least 60 days overdue, with a retail value of \$11,640 plus administrative fees of \$3,220. The Report described the service offered by Unique Management Service (UMS) a material recovery agency who specializes in helping public libraries recover long overdue items. Library directed staff to first host an Amnesty Week in August of 2013.

As described in report P-LIB-13-005, Results of Region of Waterloo Library Amnesty Week, dated October 1, 2013 the well-publicized week in August resulted in 14 long-overdue items returned, and a total value of fees and fines waived of \$1571.50. Amnesty Week advertising costs were \$547.00. The rate of return was found to be too low to make it a viable long-term solution for the recovery of overdue materials and fines.

Library Committee then approved a free 90-day trial offered by UMS to assist in recovering long overdue library items or the associated fines and fees.

Overdue process streamlined

To prepare for implementing the collection agency process, library staff first streamlined current overdue procedures. All branches were transitioned to a unified timeline of telephone and mailed notices, and notice texts were modified to include appropriate warnings about referral to a collection agency if materials were not returned on time. To coincide with these changes to the overdue process, library staff also introduced emailed “pre-due” courtesy notices, which have been extremely popular.

Results of UMS trial

RWL’s official 90-day trial with UMS began on April 8, 2013. As of May 31, 20 accounts had been referred to UMS, and \$316.09 in value recovered, comprised of \$246.10 in cash and \$69.90 in materials returned. UMS reports that RWL’s results are trending on or above average with their other customer libraries; 25% of RWL accounts have paid in full.

Staff involvement with UMS has been minimal, and the time previously required to track down long overdue accounts has been significantly reduced.

Local Context

The use of collection agencies by public libraries is increasingly common. All of the local city libraries use the services of various agencies, as do libraries within the Ontario Library Consortium, RWL’s software consortium. UMS has over 1,400 public library

customers worldwide, including large Canadian customers such as Brampton, Hamilton, Toronto and Ottawa. UMS was chosen by RWL because of their specialty in public libraries, and their ability to integrate into our library vendor (Sirsi) software, which saves a significant amount of staff time.

Public Reaction

During the trial period, some patrons have contacted their branch to say they were surprised and confused when they received overdue notices stating the possibility of referral to a collection agency. The overall impact has been positive, however, as most of these patrons quickly returned their materials and paid their fines.

Proposed Next Steps

The 90-day trial with UMS expires on July 8, 2014. Should Library Committee choose to engage UMS's services on a continuing basis, the next step will be to pursue overdue accounts back to 2012. The level at which accounts are referred to UMS is proposed to remain at \$25 owed, in order to take advantage of the UMS cost-neutral guarantee. Communication with staff and the public about the use of this service will occur at regular intervals.

On-going costs associated with UMS collection services are guaranteed to be cost-neutral to RWL, meaning that if RWL does not recover more than the total collection cost (\$15 per account) over the course of a year, UMS would not charge us the difference. However, in their experience, the average return is four times the amount spent on the service. The Region's Fees and Charges By-law includes provision for cost recovery of a collection agency service fee, which is what the \$15 charge represents.

Corporate Strategic Plan:

This initiative supports the Service Excellence Objective of the Corporate Strategic Plan, Action 5.3, "Ensure Regional programs and services are efficient and effective and demonstrate accountability to the public."

Financial Implications:

It is anticipated that 30 to 40 accounts per year may be referred to UMS, in which case the service fee that RWL would owe to UMS would be \$450-\$600. RWL collects the fines and fees from the patrons, then remits only the service fee to UMS.

The Collection services provided by UMS are guaranteed to be cost-neutral to RWL. In the event that RWL does not recover fines and fees in an amount that is greater than or equal to the amount billed for their services, UMS will issue a refund of the costs billed in excess of the amount recovered. UMS reports that most libraries see a return of at

least four times the value of the amount spent in collection fees. The net amount of fines and fees recovered will be recorded as current revenue for the Regional Library.

Other Department Consultations/Concurrence:

Finance has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Attachments:

Nil

Prepared By: Kelly Bernstein, Manager, Information Services

Approved By: Rob Horne, Commissioner, Planning, Housing and Community Services



Region of Waterloo

Community Services

Planning, Housing and Community Services

Date: June 17, 2014

Memorandum

To: Chair Todd Cowan and Members of the Library Committee

From: Lucille Bish, Director, Community Services

Subject: **Region of Waterloo Library Operations Update: April - June 2014**

File No: R09-01

Programs and Services

Spring children's programs were popular across RWL branches. Baby & Me continues its success in five libraries, attracting many new families. New morning hours at Bloomingdale, New Dundee and Wellesley branches have welcomed families with young children to programs.

Elmira branch hosted Winnipeg author Larry Verstraete for TD Canadian Children's Book Week in May. RWL received Canada Council funding for this reading through the Canadian Children's Book Centre.

Two students have been hired to prepare and deliver summer reading club programs on the theme Eureka! They will also assist with the creation of pop-up makerspaces, and reading corner spotlights for parents.

Several branches have received monetary donations from service clubs for summer reading club. There will be extra programs in the libraries on the "maker" theme, as well

as fun and educational entertainers, and more reading incentives for children as a result of their generosity.

One Book, One Community launched its 2014 title: *The Massey Murder* by Charlotte Gray. This non-fiction account of the murder of a wealthy son of a famous family by his maid, created headlines in 1910's Toronto. It has already proven to be popular with readers with many checkouts and holds on this title, and RWL owns many copies due to demand. The author will visit Waterloo Region in September, and RWL will host her at Elmira District Secondary School.

Buildings

Ayr – Staff have discussed ideas for study areas and sound baffles, and outdoor electronic signage, as proposed with the Taylor bequest. Facilities Engineering will be contacted to scope out the site and determine costs and timelines.

Elmira – We are considering moving the outdoor book drop chute so that the returned items drop into a staff area, which is more secure and efficient. Facilities staff will provide an estimate.

New Dundee - Work is progressing at New Dundee library site. New shelving and furnishings are on order. We anticipate occupancy later in the summer.

Library HQ – We will host a polling station for the June 12 provincial election.

Staff

Bette Cummings, Assistant Supervisor for children in Elmira library, retired on May 31 after 25 years of service. Local newspapers published articles about her and a well-attended public reception was held in her honour at the library.

An orientation was held at library headquarters for six new staff, to introduce them to HQ staff and learn how our work supports the branches. Another orientation will be held in June. As well, some staff have enrolled in EXCEL, a distance education course in managing a small public library, offered by the Southern Ontario Library Service.

HQ staff delivered refresher downloadLibrary training to all RWL employees this spring. Staff appreciated the support, and we have noticed that helpdesk calls have gone down significantly, because branch staff are now more comfortable answering questions themselves.

Three staff attended the Customers of SirsiDynix Users Group International (COSUGI) conference in Detroit this May to learn about new library system features and upcoming products.

Both RWL managers attended the Public Libraries Association (PLA) conference in Indianapolis. Over 8,000 public libraries from North America attended to share insights and exciting new ideas.

Collections

Our adult and A/V collections continue to float, (that is, remain at the branch to which they are returned). One patron commented to branch staff "I think the selection of new books is wonderful!" Staff are preparing to float our children's collections in the fall.

30 pedometer kits were added to the collection on May 1st, and these have circulated 49 times already. Feedback from patrons has been positive.

Courtesy "pre-due" email notices began in April. These are short emails that alert patrons 3 days before their items are due. Patrons are very appreciative of the reminders.

Sometime in June, downloadLibrary (our ebook and audiobook consortium) will reach the 1,000,000th checkout! The title of this item will be used in future promotions.

Computer/Library Technology

Public computer classes have been running regularly, and are very popular. 110 classes were held from January to April.

Staff are testing a new version of our online catalogue that enables patrons to download eBooks directly from the catalogue. The new version seems very easy to use, and we plan to launch it to the public later in June.

Wi-Fi use continues to be valued. One Elmira patron commented that while there are other public access points around town (i.e. local coffee shops) that he has tried, it is our Regional Wi-Fi signal that is the strongest and most reliable. For that reason, he has become a library member to show his support and appreciation.

Statistics

First quarter circulation statics have continued on similar trends as last year; print circulation has decreased by 10% but electronic circulation is already 51% higher than 2013, which results in a net decrease of 6%. Similar trends are reported by other library systems.

January and February were particularly slow compared to last year, but March was much closer, which leads us to believe that the much nicer weather of spring and summer will result in more checkouts.

Library programs held from January to March drew 11% more attendees than last year.

Approximately 67% of Township households have a Region of Waterloo Library card.



Region of Waterloo

Community Services

Planning, Housing and Community Services

Date: June 17, 2014

Memorandum

To: Chair Todd Cowan and Members of the Library Committee

From: Lucille Bish, Director, Community Services

Subject: **Region of Waterloo Library Financial Report: January - April, 2014**

File No: F05-30

This memo provides the Region of Waterloo Library Financial Report for the January to April, 2014 reporting period.

Revenues from fines and damages were below the year-to-date budget, but this is in line with the reduced library use experienced this past winter. Overall operating expenses were 5% under budget. Going forward, there are no anticipated concerns with the Library financial position.



The Regional Municipality of Waterloo
 Periodic Financial Report
 For Period Ending April 30, 2014

	Annual	Y-T-D	Y-T-D		
	Budget	Budget	Actuals	Variance	% Variance
REGIONAL LIBRARY					
REVENUES					
Township Property Tax Levy	2,385,336	810,112	810,112		
Grants	106,574	35,524	35,524	0	
Fines and Damages	27,750	9,252	6,322	(2,930)	31.67
Desk Receipts	4,500	1,500	1,229	(271)	18.07
Programs and Events	2,000	668	1,555	887	(132.78)
Other Operating Revenues	9,750	3,252	4,212	960	(29.52)
TOTAL REVENUES	2,535,910	860,308	858,954	(1,354)	0.16
EXPENDITURES					
Total Staffing Costs	1,877,777	625,924	578,304	47,620	7.61
Total Operating Costs	498,219	181,080	183,656	(2,576)	(1.42)
Total Inter-Departmental / Transfers	159,914	53,304	59,395	(6,091)	(11.43)
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	2,535,910	860,308	821,355	38,953	4.53
NET REGIONAL LIBRARY			37,599	37,599	