

Library Board 'disappointed' by Mulmur's withdrawal

By Marni Walsh

The Shelburne Public Library Board is deeply disappointed at the withdrawal of Mulmur Township from its library partnership and the Shelburne Public Library Board, said Board Chair Geoff Dunlop and CEO Rose Dotten.

On September 7, Mulmur Township passed the following motion:

Mulmur Township Council is supportive of the Shelburne Public Library and encourages Mulmur ratepayers to continue to patronize the library; however, Mulmur Township Council respectfully withdraws its membership on the Shelburne Public Library Board beginning January, 2017 and will go forward with a non-resident fee to be charged to the Township on a quarterly basis, with the provision of receipt of user names and addresses.

This means that Mulmur residents will no longer have a representative on the Board and that Mulmur has opted to pay for Mulmur patrons on a non-resident basis of \$100.00 per user household, say SPL representatives.

Adds Ms. Dotten: The Shelburne Public Library is committed to providing Mulmur users with all the library privileges, access to services, and resources as always. We truly value Mulmur patrons and wish to continue to enjoy our relationship.

The problem for Mulmur seems to come down to numbers and dollar signs.

Mulmur Clerk and CAO Terry Horner said Council has made several requests for the Library Board to verify Mulmur users for adequate billing, as is the case with other Libraries. Mr. Dunlop and Ms. Dotten say that Mulmur Township had been informed that due to privacy issues the Library could not release the names of Mulmur users at the time of the Township's request.

In January 2016, Mulmur expressed concern about the funding formula (a long standing fire catchment area formula) and requested the names of all Mulmur users in order to verify the number (which was 298 households) as per the formula, said the Library Board Chair. At this point, SPL did not have a waiver system in place to allow us to release their names.

The other two libraries which Mulmur contracts for services do have such a system in place. Therefore, they were able to provide the names to Mulmur. It should also be noted that Mulmur does not have a representative on the Boards of the other two libraries nor do they have access or input into their budgets. At an annual contribution of \$24,000.00, (paid to fund SPL) they felt they had been overpaying the past three years.

Earlier in the year, the SPL Board agreed to review the fee formula to see if they might better reflect the number of users. A June 8 meeting of the Mayors, CAOs and Council representatives from all municipalities, which was instigated by Mulmur Township, says Mr. Dunlop, convened at Shelburne Library, to go over budget figures from the last three years and forecast future funding.

The basis for the new funding formula was the average number of active library household patrons over three years according to the library computer circulation system, says Mr. Dunlop. Findings from 2013 to the present showed that Mulmur Township had actually 537 households as active users (rather than 298 by the old formula). The data for other townships had changed as well according to the data generated by the circulation system either more, same, or less.

With no objections to the new formula at the June meeting from any municipality, a motion was passed at the next scheduled SPL Board meeting to adopt the new formula. According to the SPL Chair, at this point, Mulmur again requested the names of all cardholders and a meeting was held with Mulmur Mayor Paul Mills and CAO Horner on August 15 in the interest of collaboration, and to resolve this issue.

In an attempt to address Mulmur Township's expressed concerns the Library Chair and CEO presented Mulmur's Mayor and CAO with a new SPL registration form containing a waiver and agreed to update all Mulmur cardholders as they came in or their memberships expired.

The next communication that SPL Board received from Mulmur was the motion passed at their September 7 Council meeting.

Presently, All patrons of the library are being asked to sign a waiver to release their names for funding purposes, says Ms. Dotten. If all current Mulmur users and new patrons sign the waiver to release their names to the Township, the new cost would be upwards of \$50,000.00 rather than the approximately \$33,000.00 which would have been allocated through the new formula.

The CEO told the Shelburne Free Press she was still hoping that the issues would be resolved with Mulmur.

On Tuesday night, a motion passed unanimously by the SPL Board ensuring the funding to cover the user fee will come directly from the Township of Mulmur, she says.

Only individual household users who do not wish to disclose their names to Mulmur Township will pay the \$100 directly to the library.

Ms. Dotten says Shelburne Public Library will invoice the Township of Mulmur on a quarterly basis according to the new formula passed by SPL resolution in June. A list of household users as of September 30, 2017, shall be presented to Township of Mulmur in the last quarter of 2017.