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Shelburne council approves changes to library board governance

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Shelburne council has approved changes to the structure and appointment process of the Shelburne Public Library Board, with the new system expected to take effect for the board term beginning around Jan. 1, 2027.

The changes follow a review by town staff, who found they could not locate a formal Town of Shelburne establishing bylaw or governance agreement creating the library board under the Public Libraries Act. Staff identified potential legal, administrative, governance and financial accountability risks with the existing arrangement.

Currently, the nine-member board includes five representatives from Shelburne and one elected representative from Amaranth, Melancthon, Mono and Mulmur. Those four municipalities independently select their representatives, without approval from Shelburne council.

The approved changes will move to a hybrid system. Beginning in 2027, the board will include three Shelburne resident representatives and two members of Shelburne council, along with one resident representative from each of the four municipalities that financially support the library through an agreement or contract.

Shelburne council will appoint all board members directly through its regular board appointment process. If another municipality does not put forward an applicant, or if an applicant is not approved, council can allocate that seat to a Shelburne resident.

The report notes that Shelburne contributes approximately 56 per cent of the library's operating budget, while the other four municipalities collectively provide the remaining 44 per cent. Shelburne also owns the library building and lands and, beginning in 2026, assumed most capital costs under a new memorandum of understanding.

During the discussion, Councillors raised concerns about the balance between financial contributions, representation and use of the library.

Shelburne currently covers the majority of the library's operating costs and will assume most capital costs under its new agreement with the library, while residents of neighbouring municipalities continue to use the facility.

Council also considered whether changes to the appointment process could affect the willingness of neighbouring municipalities to continue contributing financially to the library.

Council directed staff to prepare a new establishing bylaw for consideration by the end of September 2026.