

Extended Hours Implementation Community Engagement Summary Report

Background

The Kingston Frontenac Public Library plans to use technology to extend access to the Pittsburgh Branch. Extended Hours for an additional 22 hours a week, allowing patrons to use space and resources that would otherwise be inaccessible when the building is closed. The Extended Hours Project was included in the Library's 2022 capital budget.

Community consultation sessions were held at the Pittsburgh Branch on October 18, 2022 at 3:00pm and October 22, 2022 at 10:00am. The purpose of these sessions was to provide details on the implementation of the Extended Hours Project and to respond to questions and concerns heard in previous consultations.

The sessions were advertised in the Library's events calendar, on the website and through social media posts. An Engage KFPL newsletter was sent to the 639 people who subscribe, and to all patrons who have Pittsburgh listed as their primary branch on their profiles. A total of 19,857 people received newsletters from KFPL advertising the two sessions.

A total of six people attended the two sessions, five of whom self-identified as living in east Kingston. Laura Carter, Chief Librarian/Chief Executive Officer hosted both sessions on behalf of the Library.

Community members were also invited to submit feedback directly to the Director, Service Design and Delivery. A total of four people reached out; one asked for more information about the project and three submitted feedback which has been summarized in Appendix C.

Feedback Summary

 **Tuesday, October 18, 2022**

This session had four participants and was structured as a conversation between all the participants, with the [Extended Hours Project Implementation and Safety Protocols handout](#) as a reference.

The conversation was wide-ranging, with two participants expressing opposition to the project and two speaking in favour.

The discussion covered a variety of topics, including:

- Details of the implementation of the project including safety measures to be put into place to safeguard library property and people using the service.
- The need for the project, with a participant noting the current level of service meets their needs, and they didn't perceive the branch as overly busy. Background information, such as Library's recently completed Facilities Plan and previous planning documents was discussed.
- Questions around alerts that could be provided by the software – if many people were coming into the building all at once, for example.
- Video surveillance policies at the Library – who can access the video recordings, and from where and how long the video is kept.
- Different ways people use the Library – computers, Wi-Fi, internet, tutoring, meeting, and studying.
- Why people may prefer to attend during Extended Hours – trust in government/institutions or based on previous experiences with the Library.
- Potential change in use of this branch and other branches, such as Rideau Heights, once the work on the Third Crossing is complete.
- Suggestion to use lockers to allow for after hours items pickup rather than opening the whole branch.
- Suggestion to do more outreach to area schools, who may come during staffed or extended hours.
- One participant expressed concern for loss of potential employment if the Library was staffed for the additional hours, while another suggested that if the pilot project is a success, Library could make the case for extra staff.
- Concerns around depersonalization of service (not just at the Library) coming out the pandemic where people have become increasingly isolated.
- Structure of extended vs staffed hours and clear communications and advertising so that people would be aware of when staff would be onsite.
- One participant appreciated the choice the service provides for people to use the Library as they wish.

- One participant made notes after the session and left written feedback (see Appendix A), and two other participants followed up a few days after the session with an email (see Appendix B).

Saturday, October 22, 2022

This session had two people attend, one after the other, resulting in two one-on-one conversations.

The first participant lives nearby and is looking forward to having the Pittsburgh Branch open on Mondays and Fridays. They expressed that they were happy that the Library is considering different or extended hours and that people in their neighbourhood were so “fed up” with the library’s limited hours that they built a book box on their street. They expressed that they wished we could use more volunteers to help in the Library.

The second participant arrived just as the first participant was leaving and the discussion also covered a variety of topics, including:

- General details of how the Extended Hours Project would work and some of the reasons why it was proposed.
- The choice of the Pittsburgh Branch as a pilot location.
- Other self-service libraries in Kingston and the experience of other libraries in Ontario.
- Review of evidence to support success of Extended Hours projects at other libraries. There have not been many studies have been published. Discussed experience of other public libraries in Ontario. Participant indicated they had read one study that indicated more people identifying as male had accessed other similar types of services. People identifying as female were less likely to use.
- How they could advocate for increased funding support for the Library. Discussed Library’s funding model, allocation of the budget and greater pressures on City/County/Township finances.

Appendix A

The following feedback was received from a patron who completed the provided feedback form following the October 18th session.

1. What do you think is the biggest opportunity offered by Extended Hours

- Accessibility to library services
- Generate awareness and visibility
- Ease of service for those who cannot use the “regular” hours.

2. What do you think is the biggest risk/concern that needs to be addressed?

- Safety – parking, interior space
- Limit to users who are registered – how to enforce?
- Fear of the unknown and untested – people tend to be “risk adverse” and afraid of change

3. Is there anything else you’d like to tell us?

- Excellent presentation and discussion with Laura! Thank you so much. The Pittsburgh group that met are passionate about their library and the sharing of ideas was a wonderful opportunity to be “heard.” Please continue with full disclosure outreach and inviting children from all schools to utilize this beautiful space.

Appendix B

The following feedback was received from two participants of the October 18th session via email a few days after the session.

Extended Hours Project Pittsburgh Branch: Community Feedback Form

On Tuesday, October 18 2022 we attended the community consultation held at the Pittsburgh Branch Library regarding the Extended Hours Project. The session was attended by only two other library users besides ourselves. We expressed to Ms. Laura Carter, who facilitated the session, our concerns regarding the proposed format for the project and questioned the overall need and rationale for the project. We are writing formally to record our shared views on this issue.

We have lived in Kingston East since 1971 and first joined the Pittsburgh Library when it was housed in the old Barriefield School building. We are regular and frequent users of the current Pittsburgh Branch. We feel fortunate to have access to a branch library staffed by helpful and friendly people for four full days during the week including Saturday and on three of those the branch is open evenings until 8:00p.m.

At the outset, we would like to make it clear that our opposition is not to extended hours as such but to unstaffed extended hours. For a variety of reasons, we believe that the library should be staffed whenever it is open to users.

Our comments address both (a) the need and rationale for extended hours at the Pittsburgh Branch and (b) the reasons we are opposed to adding unstaffed hours. We are also concerned that under the proposed project every day the library is open there will be a mix of staffed and unstaffed hours, including on those days (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday) the library is presently open and staffed.

Are more hours actually needed at the Pittsburgh Branch? There are rarely more than a couple of other users present whenever we visit the library – and we visit at various times on different days. Does KFPL have current usage data for the Pittsburgh Branch and, if so, are these data publically available?

Where are the data supporting the need for extended hours, given the lack of interest in Monday and Sunday opening at the Pittsburgh Branch expressed in the Branch Hours Review survey conducted by consultants for KFPL? When we asked Ms. Carter for evidence supporting the need for additional hours she replied that “the Library received a *few* requests each year and that the local councillor

had been pressing for additional hours.” We believe the Library Board’s decision to go ahead with the Extended Hours Project should be predicated on comprehensive and sound data rather than a few anecdotal comments.

If additional opening hours are to be added to the Pittsburgh Branch (or any branch for that matter) they need to be staffed. The proposed plan to provide unstaffed extended hours raises a number of broader societal issues. Access to services provided by public libraries are fundamental to the functioning of democratic societies. Knowledgeable, friendly, professional library staff are at the core of any library and the public library provides a focal point for social interaction and cohesion within the community. Furthermore, in an era when increasing numbers of workers are facing insecure, precarious employment, communities need to protect and grow well-paid, secure public sector jobs, including those of library workers.

We learned one new and surprising aspect related to the Extended Hours project from Ms. Carter at the “consultation session” on October 18. Apparently, the library will be staffed for some hours (maybe 3-4) on the additional days (Monday and Friday) that the Pittsburgh Branch will be open under the Extended Hours Project. To quote from the handout we were given “staff will be onsite for a portion of every open day, except Sundays.” Ms. Carter stated these staffed hours will be found by reallocating staffed hours from the 4 days that the branch is currently fully staffed. In response to our questions, Ms. Carter indicated that it is likely that every day will see a mix of both staffed and unstaffed hours. Therefore, to ensure that we (and other users) will still be able to access the library at all times between 10:00a.m. and 8p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and between 9:00a.m. and 5p.m. on Saturdays, we understand that we will need to register and have a PIN number. This is likely to cause confusion for library users who are used to the existing opening hours at the Pittsburgh Branch.

In summary, in the absence of comprehensive supporting data we remain unconvinced of the need for additional unstaffed hours at the Pittsburgh Branch. In the interests of Library Board decision-making transparency, if such data exist they should be made public. If there is indeed a demonstrated demand for extra hours at the Branch, these hours should be staffed. The public library should remain inclusive and accessible to all who wish to use it; this will not be true under the proposed extended hours model. What kind of future do we want for our community? We should be valuing and protecting opportunities for social

connection and recognizing the importance and value to the community of the kind of secure, well-paid employment that library jobs represent.

We appreciate this opportunity to express our views regarding the Extended Hours Project.

John and Angharad Holmes

Appendix C

The following feedback was received from patrons who did not attend the sessions via phone message and email in the days leading up to and following the session.

Phoebe Hayes – October 13, 2022

- Heard library will be reducing staff
- Library is one of the few things in this community that works
- Staff are essential to library service
- Will never use the digital services. Will only use services with staff.

Margaret Airth – October 21, 2022

I would like to say that I am not in favour of the extended hours idea, without staffing. Issues include safety - a patron could have a medical issue and not be assisted, vandalism is very likely, and the personal touch and assistance that we all enjoy would be not available. In this pandemic period when we have all been isolated and shut off from social activities, the library should acknowledge that it serves a community purpose and having caring and interested staff during all the hours that the libraries are open is a must. It should not be about funding or trying to be innovative, at this time.

Lisa MaryAnn Jeans – October 22, 2022

I'm not able to attend the consultations on the 18th and the 22nd but would like to know more about what is planned in terms of security for times with no staff presence, particularly because the location is quiet and somewhat isolated. In general, I am very excited about the project and improved access to the branch... I have made the mistake of trying to visit on a Friday to pick up items on hold, not realizing the hours were limited. I appreciate what you are doing with the Extended Hours project at Pittsburgh Branch and look forward to learning more about what is planned!

(additional comments from same respondent)

The extended hours plan looks very well thought out, and I only have a couple of comments to add:

- I am happy to see mention of the need for a visual alarm system related to accessibility and universal design, as outside of accessibility needs clients using headphones may too miss a closing announcement. As I am in an extended family with Deaf individuals I'm aware that visual alarms are too frequently overlooked, and it is very easy to lose track of time and get lost in books/content in a library.

- I am also pleased to see that there is an access control / request system in place, as well as the security monitoring. I would like to know a little more about the emergency protocol. Personally I have experienced some aggressive and lewd behaviours in the library (two different occasions, different cities; one bullying and the other sexual harassment and threatened assault) and while there is accountability with the registration system proposed in the sense that users will be tracked, and of course it is possible to reach out to a staff person at another location, the need to fumble with a cell phone to make a call can be challenging when one is feeling threatened and alone. Are there any plans to have emergency/panic stations in the branch with a more immediate connection to either the off site library staff, the security company, or local emergency services?
- I know that this neighbourhood is generally safe and the risk is likely quite low. My question about security is in no small part motivated by my past negative experiences, which occurred in fully staffed urban main branch libraries where I was able to raise my voice to call out for help.

Thank you for your efforts to engage with community members and to extend our access to the library.