

KFPL – Extended Hours Project Open House

Community Engagement Summary Report

Background

The Kingston Frontenac Public Library plans to use technology to extend access to our Pittsburgh Branch. Extended Hours would supplement our existing hours of operation, allowing patrons to use space and resources that would otherwise be inaccessible for many hours a week.

The Extended Hours Project is included in the Library's 2022 capital plan, and our budget request to the City of Kingston has been approved by Council.

Three information open houses held on December 8, 9 and 11, 2021, launched the community engagement process for this project.

Feedback Summary

Twelve community members attended open house events on December 8 (3), December 9 (4) and December 11 (5), and one submitted their feedback by email. Participants' comments and questions are recorded in Appendix A and summarized below.

- Seven participants expressed appreciation for added hours and/or convenience provided by Extended Hours.
- Four participants shared concerns and scenarios related to patron and building security, and one participant asked practical questions about how problems would be handled during Extended Hours.
- Three participants spoke of the importance to library service of the relationships developed between staff and patrons.
- Two participants voiced worries about the potential future impacts on staffing/jobs; one participant articulated their relief that staffing hours are not being reduced as part of the project.
- Two participants asked about the potential role of volunteers during the Extended Hours project.
- One participant articulated a need for municipal funders to increase the library's budget; another participant believed that the library had little other choice if hours were to be increased.

Staff Response:

Community members shared both their time and their support for public library services, and KFPL appreciates their participation in the engagement process.

A number of concerns and potential security scenarios were shared. These concerns will be taken forward for discussion during the comprehensive safety audit planned for 2022.

The Pittsburgh Branch will continue to offer full service, with staff on site, for at least the

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currently budgeted 38 hours per week. Our [Branch Hours Review](#) currently underway will help determine which days of the week and times of day would be best suited to Extended Hours, and which would most benefit from on-site staff.

While we appreciate the interest in volunteer support during Extended Hours, [volunteer roles at KFPL](#) supplement the work of our paid staff and would not be suited to this project.

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Appendix A – Meeting Notes

Participant A *(December 8, 2022, Pittsburgh Branch)*

- Concerned about security. Will there be adequate lighting? What would be done about people rushing the door? If there is a fire or other threat would there be problems with evacuation?
- How would emergency responders enter the space if a card is required to gain access?
- What would prevent a person without a home from tucking themselves away, in the bathroom for example, and staying the night?
- How would a visitor in distress (e.g.: heart attack) receive support?
- The personal attention provided by staff is very important. Appreciates more hours, but doesn't want to lose access to staff.
- Will wildlife be a problem for those approaching the building?
- How will drug use be prevented? What would happen if someone under the influence acts out and becomes a danger to others?
- The library is filled with precious resources that need to be protected.
- The municipality needs to increase the library's budget.

Participant B *(December 8, 2022, Pittsburgh Branch)*

- More hours are appreciated.
- Happy to hear staff hours will not be impacted.
- Looking forward to having the space to themselves, more access.
- Suggested volunteers may be able to provide support as greeters, similar to a campground host.
- Asked some questions about how the technology would work to enter the building.

Participant C *(December 8, 2022, Pittsburgh Branch)*

- Primary concern is surveillance. Used example of self-checkout at grocery store that is monitored by a staff member to ensure it works and no one cheats the system; puts staff into the role of security instead of helper. Who is on the other side of the camera? What is my relationship with that camera?
- Lifelong library user. Relationships are the most important aspect of libraries, not having staff on site undermines the library's societal role. That role is crucial to society.
- Understands the rationale because "what other choice does the library have" to increase hours given the budget.
- Concerned about slippery slope and potential for future loss of staffing hours if a new Council is anti-library.

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Appendix A – Meeting Notes

- Why doing this and hours review now when everything may change when bridge opens and higher traffic in the area?
- Suggested that one-on-one meetings with concerned community members is easy and shelters the organization from hearing difficult comments all at once. Suggested a public meeting be held where people can hear each other's questions and perspectives, and our responses.

Participant D *(December 9, 2022, virtual session)*

- Had concerns about vandalism coming into the open house. Reported that others had expressed concerns about personal safety during the hours and that the simple solution is not to go during those times, but wanted to bring it forward on others' behalf.
- Will be convenient to go in after hours to pick up holds.
- Satisfied by staff explanation of the process and security plans.

Participant E *(December 9, 2022, virtual session)*

- Will there be an emergency button for patrons to use?
- What happens if someone pushes their way in when another person is accessing the space?
- What happens if someone's behavior is disruptive (e.g.: too noisy) to others.
- Would expired cards provide access? What if you have overdue items?
- Will washrooms be open? Would there be maintenance on site if a mess were made?
- What would happen if the printer breaks down or runs out of paper?

Participant F *(December 9, 2022, virtual session)*

- Retired library worker who loved offering public service.
- Enjoys the staff interactions, was concerned about staffing levels and happy to hear those won't be changing due to the project.
- Automation can positively benefit staff, self-checkouts have been good for library staff and they seem happy about it.
- Would prefer expanded staff hours.
- Sees Extended Hours as a good way to expand and bring in more users.
- Asked whether we'd be using Open Plus or another vendor.
- Had read an article online in American Libraries, library maybe in Georgia, used there a long time.
- Likes the book lockers at Calvin Park, would like to see them at other libraries, especially rural branches.

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Appendix A – Meeting Notes

- How reliable is the technology? If it breaks down what would the impacts be?
- Saw a comment from Councilor Boehme in the Whig standard saying that change is hard, but disagrees. Change that benefits us is welcome.
- This has a lot of potential.
- Library is an essential service and so vital.
- Some questions about collections – who decides what to purchase and how many copies? Some books seem to have more copies than he would have thought were needed and others not enough.
- KFPL has a wonderful collection in both quality and quantity.
- Interested in eBooks and eAudiobooks and how that collection is built (staff shared information about licensing, costs and publisher advocacy done by libraries)
- Chatham requires you to use a PIN to borrow; glad KFPL doesn't do that but wonders if library might want to consider it.
- The library is a model of how we should offer all public services, such as transportation.
- Not free, but free to use. Important difference.
- Library is a great way to spend time.
- Lucky to have such a good system that we can order books.
- Would like to see the library have more money from municipality to hire more staff.
- Heard another participants question about the timeline. Things should be implemented sooner rather than later.

Participant G *(December 9, 2022, virtual session)*

- Had some problems with microphone. Used chat to communicate.
- Hasn't been into the library in 2 ½ years, active user of digital collections.
- Was curious about what was happening so came to open house.
- Staff shared overview of project.
- Staff highlighted information about digital collections. Patron had not heard about Kanopy and was very excited to explore it. Staff shared link in the chat.

Participant H *(December 9, 2022, virtual session)*

- Past employee of KFPL and Frontenac County library.
- Interested in volunteering if there is a role for volunteers in Extended Hours project but knows may not be possible with Union.
- In general, it is key that libraries be accessible.
- Wished us luck with the project.

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Appendix A – Meeting Notes

Participant I (December 9, 2022, submitted via email)

- Generally, I believe this an ill-conceived idea, premised on an ill-founded assumption that there will be no, or negligible, instances of abuse of public property
- First, any and all of the controls and safeguards indicated can easily be circumvented. It is not difficult to secure a library card/membership. Tactically and technically capable felons or delinquents, indeed, even 'homeless' people would easily be capable of securing unfettered entry.
- Second, not all the potential long term costs of implementation have been taken into account or given sufficient weight:
 - a. The incremental cost of security when there is an occurrence at the property. A call out, whether police or private costs money that has to come out of a budget line item, be it library services, police services or some other tax-funded service;
 - b. The cost of any damage done or public property damaged or destroyed in the event of an occurrence. Much damage can be done in even the minimum interval between first reporting of and the arrival of security, police, fire or other emergency personnel; and,
 - c. The real, non-dollar-denominated, cost in time and inconvenience to regular users of library services when books or premises have to be replaced or damage repaired.
- Third, an unstated premise of this proposal is that the Barriefield Library branch is in a relatively safe and secure area. The new bridge will directly link the library with one the very highest crime/public mischief areas of the city.
- Finally, a gratuitous observation and question: I doubt any individual would open his or her own private property to comparable public access and use under the conditions proposed. Why is public property less deserving of careful stewardship?

(Staff replied to address concerns)

- Thank you. I do appreciate that you take my comments seriously enough to respond substantively. I note that the safeguards proposed all cover only situations where individuals act in good faith. You will agree that the ability to rectify or sanction illegitimate use of the property is entirely ex post facto. That means that there is no practically effective means of preventing damage, unlike the intrinsically preventive effect of having staff in place during open hours. I had, in my professional life, altogether too many occasions where entirely predictable unsatisfactory consequences were consciously ignored for short term policy reasons. It is no satisfaction to be able to say "I told you so" when the consequences of bad policy decisions are evident and the previous policy makers have flitted off to other issues and positions. Again, thank you for your consideration.

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Appendix A – Meeting Notes

Participant J *(December 11, 2022, Pittsburgh Branch)*

- Would like at least one more open day per week; community has increased tremendously
- Retired teacher-librarian, heart is in libraries being accessible
- Using Calvin Park, impossible to get to Pittsburgh during construction
- Long wait for books is a concern

Participant K *(December 11, 2022, Pittsburgh Branch)*

- Quick questions about access.
- Would a card be required, or a registration process? Is there a physical requirement to have the card?
- Staff explained about the registration process and door keypad

Participant L *(December 11, 2022, Pittsburgh Branch)*

- Concerns about safety at night, general security of the building (e.g.: someone could set a fire, deliberate damage)
- Concerns about homeless person settling in for the night
- Concern about potential for budget cuts

Participant M *(December 11, 2022, Pittsburgh Branch)*

- Wonderful to have more access
- Concerned about isolated location and limited patrols of area by Kingston Police
- Won't use the service themselves

Participant N *(December 11, 2022, Pittsburgh Branch)*

- Retired librarian
- Loves the branch, friendly staff, space always fresh and busy
- Keep up the good work
- Sure it will be good
- Understands funding limitations, amazed with what KFPL manages with our funding
- Library should be an active community centre, exciting to see something happening
- Talked about expansion in capital plan, recommends building a second branch on the other side of Hwy 15 at the other side of development so that the cozy feel and relationships with staff are still possible