

**DECEMBER 5, 2016
INAUGURAL BOARD MEETING**

The Waterloo Region District School Board held an Inaugural Board Meeting on Monday, December 5, 2016, at 7:00 p.m. in the St. Jacobs Learning Hub, with the following members in attendance: C. Harrington, J. Hendry, T. Martin, S. McMillan, C. Millar, N. Waddell and K. Woodcock.

Trustees M. Ramsay, K. Smith and C. Watson were unable to attend this evening's meeting.

Student Trustees M. Barnes and H. Jamal were in attendance.

The following supervisory officers were in attendance: J. Bryant (Director of Education and Secretary), R. DeBoer, M. Gerard, S. Lomax, A. Mercier, S. Miller, E. Ranney, L. Read, P. Rubenschuh, M. Schinkel, G. Shantz and M. Weinert.

Other staff in attendance: E. Burns, D. Elliott, J. Herring, N. Manning and L. Slupeiks.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Pro Tem J. Bryant called the meeting to order and welcomed the students of Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute who entertained trustees and staff with several musical selections.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Director of Education J. Bryant announced to trustees that he would be serving as Chairperson Pro Tem (temporary), in accordance with Board Bylaws and that he would be serving in that capacity until completion of the election of the Board Chairperson. Director J. Bryant announced that he had received regrets for this evening's meeting from Trustees M. Ramsay, K. Smith and C. Watson.

INVOCATION

Reverend Doctor Brice Palmer, Assistant Professor of Spiritual Care at Wilfrid Laurier University, provided the invocation for this evening's meeting.

OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Outgoing Board Chairperson K. Woodcock provided the following remarks:

“Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words about my experience as chair over the last year. As my tenure comes to a close I have reflected on a great many things.

The first priority of the WRDSB strategic plan is ‘Our students are first – each and every one’. With that in mind, I want to thank our student trustees and members of student senate for their willingness to actively participate in their own learning and growing. At the same time and perhaps unknowingly, they have greatly helped me in my life learning journey. Interactions with the students in this board have kept me focused on what really matters.

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The second strategic priority of the WRDSB is ‘Our staff, families and caregivers are partners in every student’s learning journey’. There are many thank you’s to acknowledge here. To Elaine Burns, thank you for your unwavering support and assistance over this last year. Your attention to detail has helped me stay organized and be in the right place at the right time. To Jayne Herring, thank you for your wisdom and patience as I continued to learn the ropes of ‘Chairing’. You always made sure I had the information I needed at my fingertips.

To Director Bryant, I express my gratitude for your patience and deep, board knowledge about the education community and your heartfelt dedication to the students and families of the WRDSB. You have ‘peeled me off the ceiling’ on a number of occasions when, from my perspective, I thought my only recourse was to charge ahead. At all times, you expressed thoughtful caution and the application of respectful and fair thinking and action. Thank you.

To senior staff, thank you for your assistance, honesty and sense of humour when working on important issues on behalf of our students and families. I very much appreciated you ‘telling it like it is” while helping me to fill in the gaps in my strategic knowledge. Thank you.

To staff throughout the system who I have had the privilege of meeting and working with, I am grateful for the chance to get to know you better and understand your role so I can better fulfill my responsibilities as trustee.

To our parents and caregivers with the WRDSB, thank you so much for making sure that the system responds to the needs of our students to the best of our ability. Through representative groups, such as PIC, WRAPSC and SEAC, trustees are able to acknowledge and understand the issues parents and caregivers face when dealing with a large, oftentimes complex, organization.

To the trustees of the Board, I want to thank you for your support over the last year. As many of you know and have experienced first-hand, the role of Chairperson requires a variety of skills. I understand and appreciate that there are many styles of leadership and while the different styles around the table have surfaced more dramatically this past year, I have no doubt that all of us are trustees for the right reason – because we care about public education. I also want to thank Vice-Chairperson Hendry and Past Chair Martin for their advice and support throughout the year.

I see this past year as primarily a year of successes while acknowledging there have been some struggles along the way. The strategic plan was developed and rolled out to the WRDSB community. The current ‘purpose statement’ input gathering has been led by students with enthusiastic support from the Communications Department. We have our operational goals in place and receive regular updates about progress.

During this past year, education in general and events impacting the WRDSB specifically have been in the news frequently. As I reflected on this past year, I was reminded of some of the positive and negative issues that have kept staff and trustees busy throughout the year. Some of the topics included, in no particular order:

- Kodaly Choir, family math nights, summer learning, school celebrations
- student achievement, EQAO results
- the wide variety of fundraising efforts in our schools and throughout the system to support great causes

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- environmental initiatives occurring at our schools in both the elementary and secondary panels
- ongoing discussion about the impacts of technology throughout the system
- safety at school and getting there
- new facility builds and upgrades
- equity and inclusion initiatives
- bullying, children's mental health, youth suicide
- graduation ceremonies and retirement celebrations
- many stories about student success and accomplishments
- special education issues
- balancing scarce resources, often not in our own control, with the needs we know exist throughout the system
- and of course, the learning that happens every day at our schools throughout the Region.

Obviously, this is by no means an exhaustive list. I provide these highlights as a reminder to trustees that in my opinion, Board members need to remain focused on strategic governance obligations that provide a road map for staff to use when they are dealing with operational matters. This delicate relationship, meaning that of staff and trustees, needs to continue to be nurtured with respectful dialogue that can lead to a deeper understanding of the connection between strategic and operational responsibilities. Additionally, that respectful dialogue amongst trustees needs to happen and will happen as we together move to improving our relationships around the board table. When those relationships are balanced, only then can we consider ourselves leaders of an exemplary public education system.

In closing, I want to share with you a portion of the valedictory address given at the commencement ceremonies at Waterloo Collegiate Institute this fall. The young lady delivering the address expressed her opinions regarding the value and privilege of an education. I quote: "Receiving an education, particularly a high-quality secondary school one, is completely transformative for an individual and for the society in which they live. Education promotes self-confidence, empowering people with knowledge, and enabling self-advocacy and autonomy. Furthermore, education is the surest path to upwards social mobility, a quality education being the most effective equity policy imaginable, allowing individuals to gain the skills and the knowledge they can use to improve their futures. To evoke Plato's famous allegory, education is the key that frees us from our shackles of ignorance, bigotry and our preconceived notions of the 'truth', forcing us to face the dazzling light of reality, leading us to question old assumptions and to seek new information."

I cannot add anything to that. Thank you for the privilege and honour of serving the Board as chairperson."

ELECTION OF BOARD CHAIRPERSON/VICE-CHAIRPERSON

APPOINT SCRUTINEERS

1. Moved by C. Harrington, seconded by N. Waddell:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board appoint Superintendents Matthew Gerard and Mark Schinkel to act as scrutineers for any elections that may be required for the office of Board Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson during the December 5, 2016, Inaugural Meeting.

-Carried Unanimously-

NOMINATIONS FOR BOARD CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson Pro-Tem J. Bryant provided trustees with a reminder of the procedure for nominations.

Trustee C. Millar nominated Trustee S. McMillan for the role of Board Chairperson. Trustee S. McMillan accepted the nomination.

There were no further nominations at this time.

CLOSE NOMINATIONS

2. Moved by T. Martin, seconded by K. Woodcock:

That the nominations for the position of Board Chairperson now be closed.

-Carried Unanimously-

Director J. Bryant announced that Trustee S. McMillan had been acclaimed to the position of Board Chairperson for the Waterloo Region District School Board.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON

NOMINATIONS FOR VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson S. McMillan assumed the role as Chairperson for the remainder of the meeting.

Trustee N. Waddell nominated Trustee T. Martin for the role of Board Vice-Chairperson. Trustee T. Martin accepted the nomination.

There were no further nominations at this time.

CLOSE NOMINATIONS

3. Moved by C. Harrington, seconded by C. Millar:

That nominations for the position of Board Vice-Chairperson now be closed.

-Carried Unanimously-

Chairperson S. McMillan announced that Trustee T. Martin was acclaimed to the position of Vice-Chairperson for the Waterloo Region District School Board.

BOARD VICE-CHAIRPERSON'S INAUGURAL REMARKS

Board Vice-Chairperson T. Martin provided thanks to trustees for electing him as Vice-Chairperson of the Board and allowing him to serve. He also requested that trustees hold him responsible to ensure he fulfills his role as Vice-Chairperson.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S INAUGURAL REMARKS

At this time, Board Chairperson S. McMillan provided a few brief remarks. He spoke about the need in our society to assign blame and to point the finger to find fault. He stated that he recognizes the challenge that is ahead of trustees and that he is sure that trustees will tackle this challenge together and move forward.

ADJOURNMENT

4. Moved by C. Harrington, seconded by K. Woodcock :

That the Inaugural Board Meeting be adjourned.

-Carried Unanimously-

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.