

**FEBRUARY 24, 2020
BOARD MEETING**

The Waterloo Region District School Board held a Board Meeting this evening at 7:00 p.m. in the Education Centre Boardroom, with the following members in attendance: J. Herring (Chairperson), K. Meissner, C. Millar, S. Piatkowski, M. Ramsay, K. Smith, N. Waddell, C. Watson, J. Weston, C. Whetham and K. Woodcock.

Student Trustee N. Chenthivelnathan was in attendance. Student Trustee M. Robinson was unable to attend this evening's meeting.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: J. Bryant (Director of Education and Secretary), R. DeBoer, M. Gerard, E. Giannopoulos, B. Lemon, A. Mercier, S. Miller, E. Ranney, L. Read, P. Rubenschuh, G. Shantz, A. Sloan and M. Weinert.

Other staff in attendance: L. Agar, K. Penticost and S. Reidel.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson J. Herring called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by K. Meissner:

That the agenda of the February 24, 2020, Board Meeting be approved.

-Carried-

CONSENT AGENDA

2. Moved by C. Millar, seconded by S. Piatkowski:

That the consent agenda of the Board Meeting of February 24, 2020, and the actions contained therein, be approved with the exception of folio 4, folio 15 pecuniary interest and folio 22 motion 17.

-Carried-

Folio 4:

Trustee C. Watson asked about the Parent Involvement Committee minutes of December 3, 2019 and the presentation on the Opioid Crisis. The presenter, Chief Larkin from Waterloo Regional Police Services, was not present, so her questions could not be answered.

Folio 15:

Trustee C. Watson asked that minutes of February 10, 2020, reflect her conflicts of interest of January 20, 2020 and January 27, 2020 In Camera meetings for which she was absent.

Folio 22 motion 17:

Trustee C. Watson expressed concern that trustees had not reviewed the recommendations from Equity and Inclusion Advisory Group (EIAG) and that they may impact policy in the future.

3. Moved by C. Millar, seconded by J. Weston:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board call the question.

-Carried-

4. Moved by C. Watson, seconded by N. Waddell:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board develop a consultation process to gather input from elementary and secondary School Councils and staff, WRAPSC, PIC, SEAC and Student Senate concerning the EIAG Fundraising recommendations; and

That the consultation information be presented to the Board of Trustees by the end of April 2020; and

That any recommendations concerning Fundraising Policy 4017 come to the board for final approval.

-Defeated-

Opposed:

K. Meissner
C. Millar
S. Piatkowski
K. Smith
N. Waddell
J. Weston
K Woodcock
N. Chenthivelnathan*

Abstained:

M. Ramsay
C. Whetham

* Student Trustees votes are recorded for the purpose of public record and for accountability to the student body; however, it is recognized that “a student trustee is not a member of the Board” (Education Act, Section 55 (2))

5. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by K. Woodcock:

That Folio 4, 15 and 22, from the consent agenda of the February 24, 2020, Board Meeting, and the actions contained therein, be approved.

-Carried-

MOTIONS FROM IN CAMERA MEETING

Note: The following motions were approved in the In Camera session held earlier this evening.

A. Moved by N. Waddell, seconded by K. Meissner:

That the agenda of the February 24, 2020, In Camera Board Meeting be deemed to meet the legislative requirements for discussion in camera.

-Carried-

B. Moved by S. Piatkowski, seconded by K. Smith:

That the consent agenda of the February 24, 2020, In Camera Board Meeting and the actions contained therein, be approved.

-Carried-

C. Moved by J. Herring, seconded by C. Whetham:

That we rise and report in public session.

-Carried-

Note: This concludes the reporting of In Camera motions.

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

Trustee C. Watson declared a conflict of interest during the Board Communications.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/CELEBRATING BOARD ACTIVITIES

Trustee M. Ramsay attended a Black History Month event with many current and retired educators.

Trustee K. Meissner oversaw the Student Trustee elections for the 2020-21 School Year. She introduced the successful candidates, Tristan John-Jandles of Huron Heights Secondary School

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and Rowan McDonald of Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate and Vocational School. There were thirteen applicants.

Student Trustees N. Chenthivelnathan attended the Ontario Student Trustees' Association Board Council Conference.

Trustee J. Weston toured the Children's Safety Village and Waterloo Regional Police Service's departments. She also attended a School Council meeting at King Edward Public School to share the work of Trustees.

Trustee K. Smith attended the TEDxKitchenerED with current and former WRDSB student speakers. She encouraged Trustees to attend Stories of Resilience and Challenge in Woke Men at the Registry Theatre on February 28, 2020.

Chairperson J. Herring shared regrets from Student Trustee M. Robinson. She also thanked Vice-Chairperson J. Weston for covering her absences earlier this month.

Trustee K. Woodcock attended WRDSB's Black Brilliance conference at the Education Centre.

Trustees S. Piatkowski and J. Weston attended an online mental health conference.

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT GOOD NEWS UPDATE

Communications Officer K. Penticost provided trustees with the monthly update. The update included activities such as the Polar Plunge fundraiser hosted by the Waterloo Region Police Services, Coronation Public School Staff Appreciation Day, an Eastwood Collegiate Institute student scholarship, Vista Hills Public School Black History Assembly and Cameron Height Collegiate Institute Black History Month Showcase. She reviewed the monthly web traffic, media coverage, media themes, 10,000 Facebook Page Likes, top social media posts and week-at-a-glance calendar. She also invited everyone to attend an upcoming Vaping Information Session.

STAFF FOLLOW UP

UPDATE ON BOARD POLICY 6010 STUDENT DRESS CODE

Superintendent B. Lemon provided trustees with an update on Board Policy 6010 - Student Dress Code. Reflecting on trustee discussions from June and in consultation with Human Rights and Equity, staff are prepared to provide a revised policy next month.

REPORTS

NORTHDALE NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP PHASE 2 PROJECT

This report was provided for information.

The report contained in Appendix A was prepared by an independent consultant, Ingrid Pregel, hired by the Steering Committee for the Waterloo Collegiate Institute (WCI)/Northdale project. The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB), Wilfrid Laurier University (Laurier) and the City of Waterloo, (“the Partners”) have created the Northdale Neighbourhood Partnership. This partnership is one of mutual benefit for partner organizations and the local community in Waterloo’s Northdale neighbourhood. Phase 1 of this project was completed in June 2016 with the delivery of a feasibility study report. Phase 2 was completed in September 2018 (report is provided in Appendix A) and laid the groundwork for a detailed site Master Plan being developed in Phase 3. The WRDSB submitted a Capital Priority business case for a 1308 pupil place replacement school on the WCI campus on September 30, 2019.

Trustees asked a number of questions and received responses related to the report.

MONTHLY SUSPENSION REPORT

This report was provided for information.

This report includes information regarding monthly and year-to-date suspension/expulsion data comparing the year to date from January 2019 and January 2020.

STUDENT AGGRESSION REPORT

This report was provided for information.

This report includes information regarding reported incidences of student aggression for November 16, 2019 to January 30, 2020. Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard referred to the trustee seminar where trustees learned of actions being taken and that two additional staff were hired to support schools directly.

REPORTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Trustee K. Woodcock reminded trustees about the upcoming deadline for submissions for policy resolutions and constitutional amendments for the OPSBA AGM.

BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

The Board received the following communications:

- Bluewater DSB SEAC to Ministry of Education - Mandatory E-learning
- Halton DSB to Ministry of Education - 2020-2021 Education Funding Feedback
- King Edward PS School Council to Ministry of Education
- Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) to Waterloo Region DSB SEAC
- WRDSB Remarks at Provincial Budget Consultation hosted by the Minister of Finance
- York Region DSB to Ministry of Education - Mandatory E-learning
- Lakehead Public Schools to Ministry of Education - Full Day Kindergarten
- Renfrew County DSB to Ministry of Education - Class Sizes and Mandatory E-learning

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Trustee K. Meissner moved that the WRDSB write another letter to the Ministry of Education.
Trustee C. Watson declared a conflict of interest and will not be voting on this motion.

Many trustees took an opportunity to speak to the motion.

Trustees want their letter to reflect the following:

- concerns with the potential decrease in the number of caring adults who will support our students
- that WRDSB will do our very best to minimize disruptions to student achievement and well-being
- concerns with lower per-pupil funding
- fear that mandating E-learning to graduate will mean that the children who are not engaged will struggle even more in a more independent learning environment.
- fear courses that keep kids motivated and engaged will need to be cut.
- the role of the trustee
- “Not all secondary students are prepared academically or emotionally to deal with the independent work or potential isolation that may accompany this type of learning” as stated in the Renfrew County District School Board letter dated February 14, 2020.
- concerns with the infrastructure, supports, and access to technology needed for E-learning as referred to in the York District School Board letter dated February 13, 2020.
- reference to the OPSBA public opinion poll
- returning to the bargaining table
- importance of quality public education
- concerns expressed in the King Edward Public School Council letter.

Chairperson J. Herring provided a recap of the actions we have taken as a board of trustees to date and her comments are below:

I was directed by board motion to write a letter of support for continued funding for FDK in a letter dated April 29, 2019 to the Minister of Education with copies to all local MPP's. We noted that publicly this government has not committed to funding FDK beyond the next school year and we confirmed our support for continued funding.

I was directed by board motion to write a letter of concern and in a letter dated June 17, 2019, to the Minister of Education, with copies to all School Board Chairs and OPSBA and all local MPP's.

As directed, this letter voiced this Board's concerns around:

- the GSN's and per pupil funding
- class size increase from 22 to 28
- our concern about the effect on specialized programs and student achievement and well-being
- our concern over the reduction in mandatory courses
- our concern over the reduction in number of caring adults in our schools
- our concern over mandatory E-learning requirements to graduate

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- our concern on the effect this will have on the number of our students who graduate
- On your behalf, I asked for a reconsideration in a decrease in per-pupil funding, class size change and mandatory E-learning
- asked the minister to confirm their support of public education and to consider the impact these changes will have on our students and the public education system

I would like to remind you this letter was sent in June of 2019. I believe we were one of the first boards to state our concerns and also our support for public education. In tonight's package, we are seeing other boards sending similar correspondence.

Out of concern for our students and staff, I released a statement on December 4, 2019, confirming the role our teachers and support staff play in the lives of our students and our understanding that job action is hard for our entire education community and our hope that an agreement would be reached soon.

I released another statement on January 24, 2020, reaffirming our understanding that this is a challenging time for all and that we are committed to continuing our support for students, families and staff throughout this process. It also stated that this board of trustees, like the majority of Ontarians, believe that education spending should be a priority and a necessary investment for the future success of our province.

I stated that our teachers and educational workers are an integral part of this success and they influence a positive and productive learning environment for our students. I stated that we will continue to advocate and work with all of our partners and hope for a swift resolution. I stated that we are looking forward to everyone getting back to the table to continue the bargaining process as they work toward a deal that is fair, equitable and responsible for all parties, most importantly our students.

Myself along with Vice-Chair Weston and Trustee Woodcock have made presentations for sustainable and equitable education funding at the Ministry of Education Funding Consultation and Vice-Chair Weston provided remarks at the invitation of the Minister of Finance at the Provincial Budget Consultation.

I believe in public education – that's why I am here. I am working hard for our students and staff as are all trustees. This process has been difficult for all of us and I am no exception. I will continue to work to support public education, our students and our staff. I would like people to realize that support may look different depending on the role you play.

As always I will take direction from this board, and I would be pleased to have another opportunity to share your support by writing another letter, if so directed.

6. Moved by K. Meissner, seconded by J. Weston:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board direct the Chairperson to write another letter on their behalf to the Minister of Education expressing concerns over the proposed cuts to education; and

Requesting that all parties return to the bargaining table and as other concerns as discussed at the February 24, 2020, Board Meeting.

-Carried-

Abstained:

M. Ramsay

C. Watson (declared a conflict of interest)

Trustee N. Waddell asked about the special consideration mentioned in the EQAO letter. She asked how many requests WRDSB makes in a year and how many are approved. Superintendent S. Miller agreed to look into the request and follow up.

QUESTION PERIOD

Trustee C. Watson asked if the 41 Equity and Inclusion Advisory Group (EIAG) recommendations would be coming to the Board of Trustees in a report. Superintendent P. Rubenschuh explained the process occurring to review these suggestions. Chairperson J. Herring confirmed that they would not be reported to the Board. Trustee K. Smith suggested that interested trustees attend the March EIAG meeting.

Trustee J. Weston asked staff to briefly speak to whether we are embedding Black history, Indigenous history and the history of non-European cultures into our social science and history curriculum year round - not as a separate unit or in a specific month. Superintendent P. Rubenschuh spoke to the work being done around Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), the increases to Indigenous curriculum in both elementary and secondary, the review of resources being used in schools and work being done regarding anti-black racism.

Trustee C. Millar asked about the status of sex-trafficking curriculum and at what point students would receive this education. Superintendent B. Lemon shared that the curriculum will be taught in Grades 7-9 and that an implementation plan has been created. The WRDSB Mental Health Lead is heavily involved due to the sensitive nature of the topic and that a system-wide rollout will need to wait until PD can be provided to staff.

Trustee C. Watson asked how many incidences of the Skull Breaking Challenge have occurred and what we are doing to inform parents. Associate Director L. Read shared that in a survey of schools, it was determined that there has only been one isolated incident at WRDSB schools. Information has been shared with administrators regarding both this and the Penny Challenge. At this time, it is believed that broader communications might actually encourage the behaviour. Staff are monitoring local social media regarding the issue.

Trustee K. Smith made reference to letters she received in regards to service dogs. She was asked to share with staff to follow up.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following Notice of Motion was served by Trustee K. Meissner with support from Trustees S. Piatkowski and C. Millar:

Whereas, according to a Statistics Canada report there has been a 207% increase in hate crimes reported by Muslims in Ontario.

Whereas, Islamophobia and religious intolerance are prevalent and longstanding problems in Waterloo Region.

Whereas, the Province of Quebec has recently passed Bill 21 which prohibits public servants in positions of authority from wearing religious symbols.

Whereas, this bill directly affects the health, well-being, and sense of belonging of members of the growing Muslim Community in Waterloo Region, and disproportionately Muslim women, who fear this bill might incite similar systemic policies, legislation, and practices in other provinces and communities, such as the province of Ontario and the Region of Waterloo.

Whereas, the Waterloo Region District School Board is committed to the human rights and dignity of all students, staff, parents/caregivers and the community it serves.

Therefore it be resolved, the Waterloo Region District School Board denounces Bill 21's intent and substance and reaffirms its commitment to its Strategic Plan and related priorities of human rights and equity, and safe and healthy workplace environments, which includes the freedom to practice one's creed or religion with dignity and respect.

Therefore be it also resolved, the Waterloo Region District School Board is urging the province and provincial advocacy bodies to affirm their commitment to policies, legislation, and practices that promote religious freedom, anti-racism, as well as promote human rights, equity, inclusion, and belonging in neighbourhoods, communities, and workplaces.

Be it finally resolved, that this resolution be forwarded to the Honourable Premier of Ontario, local Members of Provincial Parliament, and the Minister of Education.

ADJOURNMENT

7. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by C. Millar:

That the Board Meeting of February 24, 2020, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.