

MARCH 30, 2020
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

The Waterloo Region District School Board held a Special Board Meeting this evening at 7:00 p.m. via video conference 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 and K. Woodcock.

Trustee C. Whetham was unable to attend this evening's meeting.

Student Trustees N. Chenthivelnathan and M. Robinson were in attendance.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: J. Bryant (Director of Education and Secretary), M. Gerard, L. Read, A. Sloan and M. Weinert.

Other staff in attendance: B. Jaklic and S. Reidel.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson J. Herring called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

That the agenda of the March 30, 2020, Special Board Meeting be approved.

-Carried-

CONSENT AGENDA

2. Moved by S. Piatkowski, seconded by K. Meissner:

That the consent agenda of the Special Board Meeting of March 30, 2020, and the actions contained therein, be approved.

-Carried-

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

Trustee C. Watson declared a conflict of interest for Board Communications for letters referencing collective bargaining.

REPORTS

CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE

Chairperson J. Herring provided a brief introduction and thanked staff for their preparation in advance of the meeting. She reviewed the recent legislative changes allowing for electronic meetings. She shared that given the current circumstances, and as per the bylaws, special meetings would be called by the Chairperson of the Board and Director of Education, as needed, and that the regular Committee of the Whole meetings would not be resumed. She announced that the Board Retirement Dinner would be postponed to September or October, 2020. She announced that the Linda Fabi Bursary would continue to be awarded this year, but that any in-person celebrations would need to wait until the fall as well. The Tim Walker Memorial Award for Environmental Stewardship would be postponed until next year.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Director J. Bryant began the update by explaining that staff are still working through many complex issues. He reviewed the background of the staff Pandemic Response Team, initiated on March 5, 2020, and that staff have been working closely with Region of Waterloo Public Health. This team continues to meet three times a week. The Senior Strategy Team (SST) meets twice a week and consists of superintendents, senior managers and controllers. Both teams were meeting daily over March Break. A number of smaller teams are also meeting regularly including Coordinating Council and Well-being teams. Director J. Bryant has weekly teleconference meetings with the Council of Ontario Directors of Education(CODE) and with the Deputy Minister of Education.

The Communications Department has developed a COVID-19 Information page on the WRDSB website including community resources and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). They are responding to social media inquiries and continue to add content to the WRDSB@Home Distance Learning page of the WRDSB website as it becomes available. They are assisting with the creation of a distance learning portal for staff as well.

The Learning Support Services department continues to work on distance learning through the Ministry of Education Learn at Home and WRDSB@Home Phase One. Staff continue to reach out to families directly to survey their access to resources and technology. Survey results will support and inform the learning plan.

Plans are being developed centrally in collaboration with school special education resources to assist students with special needs.

Director J. Bryant reviewed the legislative changes to the suspension and expulsion process. Staff received legal advice on this matter and suspensions are currently paused.

The Human Resource Services department has been very busy ensuring staff payroll continues based on Ministry of Education direction, running and issuing records of employment and

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developing an alternative hiring process. Health, safety and security continue to secure buildings, develop communications and processes in consultation with Region of Waterloo Public Health. Work on implementing the Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP) and Human Resource Information System (HRIS) continues.

Business Services continues to work through this critical budget time. Facilities Services is now completing facility checks and site walk-thoughts, cleaning and maintaining schools, and working with contractors to reschedule capital projects. Staff are working closely with local hospitals to assist with needs and donate supplies. Closure signs will be installed on playgrounds this week. Financial Services continues to maintain treasury functions, payroll, accounts payable, procurement, risk services, and budget preparation for June. Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region (STSWR) continues to be supported and is maintaining payments to bus companies and preparing routes for September 2020. Staff are currently examining ways to support students through WEFI funds.

A number of questions were asked by trustees in advance of the meeting which were addressed. Trustees then asked questions of clarification and received responses. Staff were thanked for all the work being done during this pandemic.

BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

The Board received the following communications:

- Halton District School Board to Ministry of Education
- Bluewater District School Board to Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
- Bluewater District School Board to Minister of Education - Class Size
- Bluewater District School Board to Minister of Education - eLearning
- Upper Grand District School Board to Ministry of Education
- Avon Maitland District School Board to Ministry of Education
- Durham District School Board to Ministry of Education

WRDSB communications have been paused and will resume when circumstances are resolved. Letters directed by Board motion will continue to be written, but additional direction from trustees may be needed.

QUESTION PERIOD

Student Trustee N. Chenthivelnathan asked about alternatives to technology-based learning other than mailing resources. Director J. Bryant shared that the survey results will indicate the family's preferred method of receiving communication and materials. This will be a province-wide issue.

Student Trustee N. Chenthivelnathan asked about students eighteen years or older and if they would be contacted rather than their parents. Director J. Bryant confirmed that students who are indicated as adults would be contacted directly.

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Trustee C. Watson asked about the logistics and timing of getting learning resources to students. Director J. Bryant shared that electronic resources will be accessible first and that staff is looking forward to Phase Two of the Ministry Learn at Home plan. Teachers are working to reach each and every student.

Trustee C. Watson asked if the student survey could be expanded to parents as well. Director J. Bryant shared that the survey is being conducted by phone and teachers are speaking with the student, parent or both. Teachers then input the data into the system.

3. Moved by K. Smith, seconded by J. Weston:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board suspend the rules to allow Question Period to extend past ten minutes if required.

-Carried-

Trustee K. Smith asked if parents are being told it is alright to not have their students engaged in learning right now. Director J. Bryant agreed that this is an important message and that well-being is a priority and will continue to be reinforced.

Trustee C. Millar asked when the available Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be donated to essential services. Director J. Bryant advised that an inventory of PPE is being done and staff are working directly with local hospitals and Region of Waterloo Public Health. Staff are also looking at possible donations of available food supplies.

Trustee M. Ramsay asked if the funds being provided to bus operators were to ensure drivers were kept ready. Director J. Bryant confirmed that this is the case. Buses may also need to be used as a resource in the future for community assistance.

Trustee M. Ramsay asked if refurbished computers will be available for student use. Director J. Bryant confirmed that he is unsure of our inventory at this time, but that most devices are used to the point of exhaustion. Each secondary student was provided a Chromebook, but that accessing devices from community partners may be needed.

ADJOURNMENT

4. Moved by K. Smith, seconded by K. Meissner:

That the Special Board Meeting of March 30, 2020, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 p.m.