

MAY 20, 2020
SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

The Waterloo Region District School Board held a Special Committee of the Whole 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 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

That the agenda of the May 20, 2020, Special Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved.

-Carried-

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

REPORTS

MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF THE SCHOOL YEAR - RECAP & DISCUSSION

Chairperson J. Herring provided an introduction to this evening's Special Committee of the Whole meeting. She shared that she and Director J. Bryant sent out a joint communication today to families regarding the Ministry of Education (Ministry) announcement extending the closure of schools and continuation of distance learning until the end of the school year.

Director J. Bryant advised that while the memo regarding the extension of the closure has been received, staff are waiting to receive further clarification on some areas later this week. He shared that the Ministry has been very supportive and will be turning its attention to the reopening of schools and the supports and considerations needed. The Ministry is establishing a

MAY 20, 2020

SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

process for formalized input regarding the reopening of schools. The WRDSB has commenced its own committee work regarding returning to school. He shared that at this time, only 51 of 64,000 students have not been reached by their teachers.

Mike is joining the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Trustees were provided an opportunity to ask questions. Interim Chief Communications Officer Sloan offered to provide trustees an update via email regarding how today's communication would be shared with those without internet access.

Staff have been working on a process for families to access schools. They are waiting on a protocol template from the Deputy Minister. Once the template is received, it will be completed by staff and brought to Public Health for consultation.

Trustees requested staff ensure communication protocols for families are clear and easily accessible. Staff will need to review data collected to see if it captures information regarding students who started with distance learning and have since decided to disengage. In September, like with any school year, teachers will use professional judgement to determine the needs of students in their classroom and teach using a differentiated approach.

SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING UPDATE

Director J. Bryant and Associate Director L. Read provided trustees with a presentation on synchronous learning. The presentation began with a review of the WRDSB messaging and continued approach to distance learning. The presentation included definitions for asynchronous and synchronous learning and shared resources provided to staff to assist with both types of learning and supporting students. It included updates on staff training, the upcoming distribution of wifi enabled devices, and the continued commitment to connect with students and families. The presentation concluded with a graphic representation, created by Karen Scian, of some of the most important messages related to WRDSB's distance learning strategy.

Trustees were provided an opportunity to ask questions. They received information on professional development available for administrators. Parents are encouraged to reach out to teachers and administrators to collaborate to meet the learning needs of students. Staff agreed to come back with information regarding a breakdown of the 51 students who have not yet been reached. Staff will look into determining the best format for providing the information in the presentation to families. Staff continue to trust in the professional judgement of educators and have confidence in their commitment to supporting each and every student. Students or families are always encouraged to connect with teachers or guidance counsellors if they need assistance.

VOLUNTARY REDEPLOYMENT OF EDUCATION WORKERS UPDATE

Coordinating Superintendent M. Weinert provided the background of the voluntary redeployment process since first announced on May 8, 2020. The documentation was developed jointly with the union groups and trustee associations.

MAY 20, 2020
SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

Trustee C. Watson left the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

Coordinating Superintendent M. Weinert continued his update sharing meetings which have occurred with employee groups and the conditions required for redeployment. Once employee groups have signed off, interested employees will be able to register through an online portal. If matched to a position, the Ministry will notify the WRDSB to ensure the redeployment does not interfere with the continuity of learning. A fair bit of staff time is needed to manage the redeployment process. He confirmed that additional liability requirements have been added to the agreements.

ADJOURNMENT

2. Moved by K. Smith, seconded by M. Ramsay:

That the Special Committee of the Whole Meeting of May 20, 2020, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 p.m.