

DECEMBER 7, 2020
INAUGURAL BOARD MEETING

The Waterloo Region District School Board held an Inaugural Board Meeting on Monday, December 7, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. via video conference, with the following members in attendance: J. Herring, K. Meissner, C. Millar, S. Piatkowski, M. Ramsay, K. Smith, L. Tremble, J. Weston, and K. Woodcock.

Trustees C. Watson and C. Whetham were unable to attend this evening's meeting.

Student Trustees T. John-Jandles and R. McDonald were in attendance.

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

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Pro Tem J. Bryant called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m..

Director of Education and Secretary J. Bryant announced to trustees that he would be serving as Chairperson Pro Tem, in accordance with Board Bylaws, and that he would be serving in that capacity until completion of the election of the Board Chairperson.

After the Territorial Acknowledgement and National Anthem, Director J. Bryant invited outgoing Chairperson J. Herring to introduce her musical selection for the evening.

Outgoing Chairperson J. Herring shared a clip of Distance Learning Students singing Let It Be under the direction of their teacher Jeff Donkersgoed.

Trustee M. Ramsay joined the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

OPENING REMARKS

Outgoing Chairperson J. Herring introduced Senator Marty Deacon. Senator Deacon provided a presentation speaking to the leadership of outgoing Chairperson J. Herring, the hard work of trustees and staff, the difficulty brought by the pandemic and how her experience in the education sector provides value in her role as senator. She ended the presentation with a clip from her annual holiday video.

ELECTION OF BOARD CHAIRPERSON/VICE-CHAIRPERSON

APPOINT SCRUTINEERS

Board bylaws state that the Director, as Chairperson Pro Tem, shall name two staff members to act as scrutineers for the election of Chairperson and Vice-Chair. Coordinating Superintendents M. Gerard and M. Weinert were selected as scrutineers.

NOMINATIONS FOR BOARD CHAIRPERSON

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

Trustee J. Herring nominated Trustee J. Weston for the role of Board Chairperson.

There were no other nominations at this time.

CLOSE NOMINATIONS

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

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

-Carried-

Trustee J. Weston accepted the nomination and took a moment to speak to the nomination.

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

Director J. Bryant invited Chairperson J. Weston to chair the remainder of the meeting.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON

NOMINATIONS FOR VICE-CHAIR

Chairperson J. Weston assumed the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Trustee K. Meissner nominated Trustee S. Piatkowski for the role of Board Vice-Chair.

There were no further nominations at this time.

CLOSE NOMINATIONS

2. Moved by C. Millar, seconded by K. Woodcock:

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

-Carried-

Trustee S. Piatkowski accepted the nomination.

Chairperson J. Weston announced that Trustee S. Piatkowski was acclaimed as Vice-Chair for the Waterloo Region District School Board.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S INAUGURAL REMARKS

At this time, Board Chairperson J. Weston presented the following remarks:

Thank you to my colleagues for your confidence in me to represent the WRDSB as Chairperson. Your support means a lot to me personally and professionally as we look to the challenges ahead of us. Congratulations to Trustee Piatowski on being acclaimed to the position of Vice Chair. I look forward to working as closely with Vice Chair Piatowski as past Chair Herring and I did.

I am very proud to work with this group of Trustees. You all care deeply about our students and staff and it shows in your commitment, hard work and focus on the wellbeing of students and staff. I am also proud that we put kindness and respect at the forefront of everything we do - I know we will do the same in this coming year.

I want to recognize and thank Director Bryant, the senior team and every employee of the board for their tireless work throughout this pandemic. You have all worked harder than ever before in incredibly difficult, stressful and ever changing circumstances to ensure our students are safe and that they continue to receive the finest education. You all are vital to the success of this board. I hope you all enjoy a well deserved rest during the upcoming Christmas break.

Students, you are the reason why each of us is here. I know that school is not how it used to be and that you are feeling the effects of the pandemic in different ways. We are focused on ensuring you have what you need to succeed, especially in these difficult times. Together with your families, we will get through this.

While the upcoming rollout of a vaccine gives us hope that the end of the pandemic is in sight, we know that there are still tough times ahead. Beyond this immediate COVID crisis, we also face the longer term crises of racism and climate change. I firmly believe that this board is up to the challenges ahead and we will meet them head on, leading through education and example.

And we Trustees will also continue to advocate for a strong public education system in Ontario and ensure that the policies that guide this school board are equitable, inclusive and focused on

DECEMBER 7, 2020
INAUGURAL BOARD MEETING

student achievement and wellbeing for each and every one of our students. Our strategic plan remains at the front and center of all our work.

I look forward to working with all of you in the year ahead.

Thank you and stay safe

BOARD VICE-CHAIR'S INAUGURAL REMARKS

At this time, Board Vice-Chairperson S. Piatkowski presented the following remarks:

First, thank you to Trustee Meissner for nominating me and for what can only assume would have been her kind words on my behalf. It is an honour to serve alongside her and even bigger honour to have her support for the role of Vice-Chair. I will try very hard to live up to those expectations.

I also want to thank all of my valued Trustee colleagues for putting their confidence in me for this role.

While an acclamation might seem like the “easy” way to assume a new position, I believe that both I and newly-elected Chair Weston have simply done what’s necessary to build support around the board table and are assuming our new roles with the full confidence of fellow Trustees.

To Chair Weston, I can only hope that I can be as effective in the role of Vice-Chair as she has been over the past two years. I will be a backup whenever she needs me to step in and a sounding board whenever she needs one.

Finally, I want to thank outgoing Chair Herring for her steadfast leadership of this Board since it was first sworn in. It’s obviously been a very challenging term, yet she rose to every challenge. I’m looking forward to her continuing mentorship in her new role of Past Chair.

OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Outgoing Chairperson J. Herring presented the following remarks:

Thank you, Madam Chair,

When I think back to my first term and the concerns that were facing us as a Board, concerns that at the time seemed large and all consuming...well, if only we had known what the future would bring to our world.

One of my early goals as your Chair was to help us find a way to function as a cohesive board, one that was focused more on the important issues that our students and families were facing and less focused on internal issues and relationships, one where we could discuss differing opinions

DECEMBER 7, 2020
INAUGURAL BOARD MEETING

and controversial issues while still treating each other with respect and kindness and where we debated issues not individuals. I am pleased to report this is our Board. You did it. WE did it. And while we often have differences in opinion – our conversations toward each other are issues based, respectful and kind. This makes me very proud to be a member of this board.

This past year as a Board we have navigated and faced challenging times together; this Board of Trustees is the only group of trustees in WRDSB history that continued to meet all summer –we had five meetings in addition to pivoting to fully online meetings and mastering zoom, and so when we talk about everyone working hard throughout this pandemic you can add Trustees to that list.

As a Board we unanimously approved to mandate masks for K-2 students... to add protection for our students and although not a popular decision with some families and community members at the time, we all knew it was absolutely the right decision, and one of which I will always be proud.

We said goodbye to Trustee Natalie Waddell and welcomed Trustee Laurie Tremble. We passed what we can only hope is our first and only deficit budget with a great deal of the funds being diverted to protect our students and staff and prepare our schools to deal with Covid 19. We served many motions and have formed new Ad Hoc committees to address a variety of important issues. We began our journey toward improving our equity consciousness, and as a Board we recently resolved our focus and commitment to this important work.

Covid19 has been a challenge for our students, staff, families, community and the world like no other. I know that Friday, March 13, 2019, the day our schools closed, will be etched in my memory forever.

I am immensely proud of the work our entire education community did to pivot to an online format during those early days, the amount of time our Director and Senior Team spent in planning on how we can move forward TOGETHER, with an equity focus, for the benefit of our students, staff and families cannot be overlooked. Our Teachers, Educational Support Staff and Bus Drivers became frontline essential workers. The amount of stress, uncertainty and sacrifice from these individuals has taken its toll and is still a daily challenge and will be for some time to come. I have heard from many families that are very grateful for all you have done to keep our schools safe and open. We must ensure that we continue to support each other through the difficult days still ahead of us. Again, thank you all.

There is hope ahead. I believe in 2021 we will triumph over the virus and with the help of a vaccine that we, our schools and the world, will slowly return to a new normal. But there will be new challenges ahead and I fear our students and staff and families may need our full support in a post-pandemic world.

I have every confidence that with our new leadership under Chair Weston and Vice Chair Piatowski, and with the support of our Director and the entire Senior Team and our wonderful staff, that the WRDSB is well positioned to continue to provide our students with an exceptional public education.

DECEMBER 7, 2020
INAUGURAL BOARD MEETING

I would like to thank everyone at this table for the support you have shown over the past two years, it made the job of being your Chair easier. I especially thank our new Chair Weston, for serving as vice-chair these past two years. Joanne I couldn't have done it without your support, advice and friendship. I have first-hand experience with your leadership abilities and skill set and I know that you will excel in your new role.

Thank you also to Director Bryant for his calm leadership and support, it has been a pleasure to work with you again. Thank you to Associate Director Read and to the entire senior team. Thank you all for your support and for responding to the numerous emails I sent you at all hours of the day and night. I hope that you are able to spend some time with your families during this holiday season.

In closing, it truly has been an honour and privilege to serve as the Chairperson of the WRDSB. Here's hoping for a better 2021 for us all.

Thank you.

PRESENTATION TO OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON

Board Chairperson J. Weston spoke to the work of outgoing Chairperson J. Herring during her two terms as Chairperson. She was also presented with a gavel to commemorate her time as Chairperson.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Inaugural Board Meeting be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.