

JANUARY 18, 2021
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

The Waterloo Region District School Board held a Committee of the Whole Meeting this evening at 7:00 p.m. via video conference, with the following members in attendance: J. Weston (Chairperson), J. Herring, K. Meissner, C. Millar, S. Piatkowski, M. Ramsay, K. Smith, L. Tremble, C. Watson, C. Whetham and K. Woodcock.

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, M. Gerard, N. Landry, C. Newton, L. Read, P. Rubenschuh, and M. Weinert.

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson J. Weston called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

That the agenda of the January 18, 2021, Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved with the addition of a Student Senate Update under Board Reports.

-Carried-

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

Trustee C. Watson had a declaration of pecuniary interest at the previous in camera meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee C. Millar shared that she attended the first session of the Intensive Human Rights for School Board Leaders program with Trustees J. Weston, S. Piatkowski, K. Meissner, J. Herring, K. Woodcock and L. Tremble. She also notes that Student Trustee T. John-Jandles was a presenter at the session.

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Trustee M. Ramsay joined the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 1010 - ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES

When asked about consultation with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Superintendent P. Rubenschuh shared that staff are working through a review of their multi-year plan, which will include further review of the policy and consultation with stakeholders. Housekeeping updates will also be made to the policy.

2. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by J. Herring:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve Board Policy 1010 - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities as presented at the January 18, 2021, Committee of the Whole Meeting.

-Carried-

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 2000 - ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

In reviewing the policy, trustees asked that it be reviewed with equity and inclusion staff to see if it would be appropriate to mention the stewardship of the land and values represented by the Indigenous people.

It was noted that the Human Rights and Equity review mechanism is still being implemented.

3. Moved by L. Tremble, seconded by K. Meissner:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board refer Board Policy 2000 - Environmental Values back to staff to review with equity and inclusion staff.

-Carried-

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 5010 - EMPLOYMENT AND PLACEMENT OF RELATIVES

Trustees discussed the policy and noted corrections are needed to change “close relatives” and “close family members” to “relatives”. They also noted some housekeeping updates to change “Board” to “WRDSB”.

Trustees asked about the process used to ensure the policy is being followed during the hiring process. Coordinating Superintendent M. Weinert agreed that staff could perform a spot-check to verify if the policy is being adhered to and report back to trustees with the findings.

4. Moved by J. Herring, seconded by S. Piatkowski:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve Board Policy 5010 - Employment and Placement of Relatives as presented at the January 18, 2021, Committee of the Whole Meeting with the corrections to “relatives” in sections 1, 3.3, 3.4 and 4.1. and the necessary housekeeping updates.

-Carried-

REPORTS

2020-21 INTERIM FINANCIAL REPORT AND FORECAST

The report was provided for information.

Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard and N. Landry, Controller - Financial Services shared the report which includes the key budget risks for 2020-2021 and the first quarter financial reports. The report noted the limited ability of staff to significantly alter the forecast of the year-end financial position based on three months of operations, particularly in a year filled with uncertainty regarding the ongoing impact of COVID-19. Consistent with the approved budget for 2020-21, staff expects the WRDSB to finish the year in a deficit position.

Trustees asked questions regarding the deficit, purchasing commodities and enrolment.

MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS QUARTERLY UPDATE

The report was provided for information.

Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard shared the report which included current capital projects with budgets greater than \$2.5M. The report provided the status of each project relative to the schedule, budget and scope. Significant milestones, along with basic project statistics, were also presented. All projects are proceeding as planned through the design and construction stages with the exception of the two childcare additions at Saginaw Public School and Lackner Woods Public School. Business Services is still awaiting a response of “Approval to Proceed”, for both projects, which were submitted to the Ministry for additional funding prior to tendering these projects.

Trustees asked questions regarding the timing of the two childcare additions.

STAFF AND BOARD REPORTS

STUDENT SENATE UPDATE

Student Trustees T. John-Jandles and R. McDonald provided an update from the recent Student Senate meetings and plans for upcoming meetings.

QUESTION PERIOD

Trustee M. Ramsay asked how Administrators are supervising their staff and ensuring educators are being accountable in a virtual environment. Director J. Bryant confirmed that Administrators continue to meet with and supervise staff both virtually and in person. Both Learning Support Services and Information Technology Services continue to support and offer resources to assist Administrators in their duties. Expectations for Administrators have not changed. Associate Director L. Read shared that the Administrators assigned to the Distance Learning Program are working closely with educators to develop individualized plans to assist students in need of re-engagement.

As a follow up, Trustee M. Ramsay asked how a parent could share their concerns with the administrator and if classes are recorded. Associate Director L. Read shared that parents should follow the normal communication channels. The list of Distance Learning Administrators is available online or parents can also reach out to their home school Administrator to direct them accordingly. It was also noted that educators are not recording live classes with students present, but that a teacher may pre-record a lesson to share with their class.

Trustee S. Piatkowski expressed concerns for staff working with students who are unable to wear masks and asked if we would request vaccine prioritization for these staff members. Coordinating Superintendent M. Weinert shared that we can ask Public Health to bring forward a request to the province and that the Minister of Education also intends to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 18, 2021, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.