

**MARCH 29, 2021
BOARD MEETING**

The Waterloo Region District School Board held a Board 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, R. DeBoer, M. Gerard, E. Giannopoulos, B. Lemon, D. Liebermann, S. Miller, C. Newton, L. Read, P. Rubenschuh, G. Shantz, 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 K. Meissner:

That the agenda of the March 29, 2021, Board Meeting be approved.

-Carried-

CONSENT AGENDA

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

That the consent agenda of the Board Meeting of March 29, 2021, 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 C. Whetham, seconded by C. Millar:

That the agenda of the March 29, 2021, In Camera Board Meeting be deemed to meet the legislative requirements for discussion in camera with the addition of a GCI Amphitheatre Update under Property Matters.

-Carried-

B. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by C. Whetham:

That the consent agenda of the March 29, 2021, In Camera Board Meeting and the actions contained therein, be approved.

-Carried-

C. Moved by K. Smith, seconded by L. Tremble:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the Local Agreement, summarized in the report, dated March 29, 2021, with the ETFO, Waterloo Region – Designated Early Childhood Educators, for the period September 1, 2019, to August 31, 2022.

-Carried-

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

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 for the previous in camera meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/CELEBRATING BOARD ACTIVITIES

Chairperson J. Weston announced that Joan M. Green and Associates has been selected to perform the Director of Education search beginning with consultation in the third week of April. She also added that Director J. Bryant has agreed to postpone his retirement until June 30, 2021.

STAFF FOLLOW UP

SPOT CHECK OF BOARD POLICY 5010 - EMPLOYMENT AND PLACEMENT OF RELATIVES

Coordinating Superintendent M. Weinert reviewed that trustees requested a spot check of the policy when it was approved earlier this year. He shared that a high-level review was conducted of all employee groups. He advised that no conflicts were found in the packages that were reviewed and he shared the process which would occur if a conflict arose. He also shared changes that will be made to the form and some additional steps being considered.

REPORTS

STUDENT SUSPENSION/EXPULSION REPORT, JANUARY 2021 & FEBRUARY 2021

These two reports were provided for information.

A note has been included to indicate the modes of learning at this time. Trustees asked about the future of these reports and possible changes as student census data is collected.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC VERBAL UPDATE

Director J Bryant shared that the COVID-19 Pandemic Update is a verbal report focussing on work with Region of Waterloo Public Health (Public Health). He provided a high-level overview of the WRDSB's relationship with Public Health and the focus on student health and safety. Vaccination priorities are determined provincially and Phase 2 includes school-based staff. The rollout of Phase 2 is decided by public health units given the local pandemic conditions and vaccine availability.

Trustee M. Ramsay joined the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Superintendent B. Lemon shared the ongoing consultation occurring with Public Health.

Trustee J. Herring expressed concern for special education staff and moved a motion to prioritize vaccinations for special education staff. Trustees discussed the motion and it was agreed that senior staff can assist with the appropriate wording regarding staff receiving vaccinations and that copies of the letter would be sent to OPSBA and all Ontario board chairs..

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

That the WRDSB Board of Trustees direct the Chairperson to write a letter to our Public Health Officer and Regional Council requesting the immediate prioritization of vaccines for Special Education Workers; and

That consideration be given, pending the availability of vaccine, for the prioritization of the remaining WRDSB school-based staff and WRDSB staff who are required to work in a school setting and/or provide either direct or indirect service to students, to receive the vaccination during the April 12-16 break; or a date as soon as possible before June;

That copies of this letter also be provided to the Minister of Education, Premier, OPSBA and Board Chairs.

-Carried-

Trustees continued to ask questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions were asked regarding the upcoming April Break, possible future moves to remote learning, providing the necessary technology to students and communication with parents.

BOARD RETIREMENT CELEBRATION, 2019-20 & 2020-21

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board Retirement Dinners for our 2019-20 and 2020-21 retirees have been postponed. Given the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, it is unknown what the Public Health Guidelines will be in the fall of 2021 and whether holding a large, indoor dinner will be possible. In lieu of providing a dinner, the board will make a donation to Nutrition for Learning or Food4Kids on behalf of each retiree to address the food insecurity faced by families and students in our community. An explanation of each charity's mission will be provided so that retirees can select which one they would like to support. A retirement gift of a mantle clock will still be provided to all retirees. As an exception for this recognition event, retirees will have the option to receive the mantle clock or have the WRDSB donate an equivalent value to either Nutrition for Learning or Food4Kids. Clocks will be couriered to retirees.

Trustees discussed the option and noted it was a good alternative given the pandemic.

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

That, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and health and safety restrictions, the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) approve celebrating 2019-20 and 2020-21 WRDSB retirees by making a donation on their behalf to address the food insecurity in our region; and

That the 2019-20 and 2020-21 retirees are provided a gift to acknowledge their service to the board.

-Carried-

QUESTION PERIOD

Student Trustee R. McDonald shared that he has received feedback from graduating students expressing disappointment with a virtual commencement ceremony in June and asked if staff would consider postponing the decision until the fall. Superintendent R. DeBoer shared that the decision was not made lightly. It was guided by health and safety, equity and consistency among the schools, recognizing each school has traditions. The Ministry of Education (Ministry) has indicated that WRDSB will continue as a designated school board and we do not anticipate being able to hold large group gatherings in the fall. The hope was to end this COVID impacted school year in a celebratory fashion. Students will be able to have input as part of the school-level differentiation.

Student Trustee R. McDonald asked if the Ministry directed boards to have virtual commencements in June. Superintendent R. DeBoer confirmed that while no direction was received for commencement, this is a consistent approach with neighbouring school boards.

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Trustee M. Ramsay agreed with Student Trustee R. McDonald's comments and made some suggestions regarding commencement.

Student Trustee T. John-Jandles asked if students will be consulted in commencement decisions. Superintendent R. DeBoer indicated that at the school level, student leadership will have an opportunity to participate in the planning.

Student Trustee T. John-Jandles asked if board staff will be directing the process for schools. Superintendent R. DeBoer stated the need for an equitable and consistent approach to commencement, but that each school will have an opportunity to differentiate within that and noted the in-person piece will likely look different at each school.

Trustee C. Millar asked if the WRDSB collected feedback or data from last year's virtual commencement. Superintendent R. DeBoer did not have any data from last year. He reiterated that consultation with students will occur at the school level.

Trustee C. Millar asked how schools will be accessing the student voice. Superintendent R. DeBoer shared that schools could have a differentiated approach but will reach out to students in some manner. He advised he will emphasize the importance of consulting students at his next meeting with principals.

Trustee C. Watson asked how we go about ensuring student voice is included with future commencement decisions. Superintendent R. DeBoer confirmed that there are schools where students are already included in the planning process and he will share this feedback.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no future agenda items.

ADJOURNMENT

5. Moved by K. Smith, seconded by C. Whetham:

That the Board Meeting of March 29, 2021, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.