

**DECEMBER 6, 2021
INAUGURAL BOARD MEETING**

The Waterloo Region District School Board held an Inaugural Board Meeting on Monday, December 6, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via video conference, with the following members in attendance: J. Herring, K. Meissner, C. Millar, S. Piatkowski, L. Tremble, C. Watson, J. Weston, C. Whetham and K. Woodcock.

Trustees M. Ramsay and K. Smith were unable to attend this evening's meeting.

Student Trustees K. Soror and N. Vishkin were in attendance.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: j. chanicka (Director of Education and Secretary), D. Ahluwalia, J. Albrecht, R. DeBoer, E. Dougan-McKenzie, M. Gerard, E. Giannopoulos, C. Hill, P. Kaur, D. Lataille-Herdsman, B. Lemon, S. Miller, L. Read, P. Rubenschuh and G. Shantz.

Other staff in attendance: R. Lam, N. Robinson and S. Reidel.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Pro Tem j. chanicka called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m..

Director of Education and Secretary j. chanicka 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.

Associate Direction L. Read provided a Land Acknowledgement.

OPENING REMARKS

N. Robinson, Equity and Inclusion Officer - Indigenous Focus, introduced Myeengun Henry, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation council member and Manager of Aboriginal Services at Conestoga College.

Myeengun Henry provided opening remarks to trustees speaking to Truth and Reconciliation, the work required in education and the wisdom of elders.

Director j. chanicka thanked Myeengun Henry for his remarks.

MUSICAL SELECTION

Director j. chanicka introduced the video "Up We Go" from Eastwood Collegiate Institute's Songwriting Recording Class.

Director j. chanicka acknowledged the passing of Martha Rogers, former Director of Education at Upper Grand District School Board.

ELECTION OF BOARD CHAIRPERSON/VICE-CHAIRPERSON

APPOINT SCRUTINEERS

The Board's 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 Matthew Gerard and Graham Shantz were selected as scrutineers.

NOMINATIONS FOR BOARD CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson Pro-Tem j. chanicka provided trustees with a reminder of the procedure for nominations.

Trustee J. Weston nominated Trustee S. Piatkowski for the role of Board Chairperson.

There were no other nominations at this time.

Trustee S. Piatkowski accepted the nomination. Trustee Weston spoke to her nomination of Trustee S. Piatkowski.

Director j. chanicka announced that Trustee S. Piatkowski had been acclaimed to the position of Board Chairperson for the Waterloo Region District School Board.

Director j. chanicka invited Chairperson S. Piatkowski to chair the remainder of the meeting.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

NOMINATIONS FOR VICE-CHAIR

Chairperson S. Piatkowski assumed the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Trustee J. Herring nominated Trustee K. Woodcock for the role of Board Vice-Chair.

There were no further nominations at this time.

Trustee K. Woodcock accepted the nomination. Trustee J. Herring spoke to the nomination of Trustee K. Woodcock.

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

BOARD VICE-CHAIR'S INAUGURAL REMARKS

At this time, Board Vice-Chair K. Woodcock thanked Trustee J. Herring for nominating me and referred to Elder Henry's mention of hope. She was hopeful that, together, we can get through the pandemic.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S INAUGURAL REMARKS

At this time, Board Chairperson S. Piatkowski presented his remarks:

To begin, I want to say thank you.

Thank you to outgoing Chair Weston for her very kind remarks in nominating me and for her stellar leadership over the past year and the two years prior to that as Vice-Chair. I have greatly appreciated the genuinely collaborative approach to the role of Chair that both she and Past Chair Herring took, and I intend to continue that approach. I'm looking forward to continuing mentorship and support from both of them, as well as from newly elected Vice-Chair Woodcock. Thank you as well to my fellow Trustees for granting me the privilege of serving in this role. I truly value the support that has been offered to me by those around the virtual boardroom since I first decided to seek this role. It is an honour to serve alongside all of you and an even bigger honour to be chosen as Chairperson. Thank you for putting your confidence in me. I will try very hard to live up to that confidence.

This has obviously been a very challenging term for the Board of Trustees, and the next year is not going to get any easier. But I've never been someone who has shied away from a challenge and I'm ready to take on this one.

I also want to thank the senior team – particularly Director of Education Chanicka and Associate Director Read – for their steadfast navigation through some very stormy waters. I welcome the opportunity to collaborate more closely with all members of the team as Chairperson.

Of course, the strength of our system isn't just a function of the efforts of Trustees and senior staff – far from it, in fact. Our success relies on every single one of our valued employees. We all understand that this is a highly challenging time in education, as it is in our broader society. Being an education worker is not an easy job at the best of times, and these are far from the best of times.

As the new Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, I want our employees to know that I and my colleagues will continue to work tirelessly with the senior team to try to ensure that you have the resources, safety measures and personal supports that you need to do your jobs effectively. We understand that you cannot support students if you aren't supported yourself.

Lastly, and most importantly, to our WRDSB families, I hope that we will meet or exceed your rightfully high expectations for your children's education and wellbeing. If we ever fall short, I am counting on you to let us know, so that we can strive to do better. As our strategic plan says, our students come first, each and every one.

PRESENTATION TO OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON

Board Chairperson S. Piatkowski spoke to the work of outgoing Chairperson J. Weston during her term as Chairperson. She will also be presented with a gavel to commemorate her time as Chairperson.

OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Outgoing Chairperson J. Weston presented the following remarks:

I would like to start by thanking everyone who supported me over this past year as Chairperson. It has been a year like no other and I could not have done it without you.

When I took on the role of Chair, I honestly hoped that the pandemic would be mostly behind us by midyear and we would be back to normal schooling and meetings by the fall. Unfortunately, the pandemic continues to dominate our lives; though with everyone over age five now eligible for vaccinations, I am hopeful for 2022. But, whatever happens in 2022, we must continue to challenge ourselves on how we can do better for each and every one of our students.

This Board of Trustees started work in 2021 with three important ad hoc committees that reviewed suspensions, the SRO program and school names. The committees recommended, and the Board of Trustees agreed, that changes were required to improve our schools and make these spaces safer for students. Some of these discussions were difficult, but I am very proud of the decisions this Board has made to ensure each and every student can learn in a supportive and safe environment.

I am also proud of the advocacy work this Board has done. We advocated for stop-arm cameras, that mandatory Black history be added to the curriculum and for additional support from the Ministry to help prevent the spread of COVID.

This year, we said goodbye to Director John Bryant as he retired and hired Director Jeewan Chanicka as our new Director of Education. It has been my absolute pleasure to get to know and work closely with Director Chanicka. I know our students, staff and families are in good hands as he focuses on building relationships and preparing our students for the 22nd century.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the incredible work everyone across the system is doing - the senior team, teachers, support staff, bus drivers, crossing guards and staff at the Education Center. Thank you all for continuing to be creative and finding ways to engage and support students, while keeping them safe, in another challenging year. I recognize the stress and sacrifice that is behind all the work that you are doing. I wish you all a restful break later this month. Again, thank you all.

I also want to thank Chair Piatkowski for his support as Vice-Chair and Trustee Herring as Past Chair. Your support and advice have been invaluable.

It has been my honour to serve as Chairperson of the WRDSB. I have every confidence in Chair Piatkowski and Vice Chair Woodcock to lead our board through 2022 and the challenges and accomplishments that lay ahead. I look forward to supporting them as we, together, support the students, staff and families in our Board.

Take care and stay safe. On we go, up we go... Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson S. Piatkowski acknowledged that today was the thirty-second anniversary of the Montreal Massacre where fourteen women were murdered.

1. Moved by J. Herring, seconded by L. Tremble:

That the Inaugural Board Meeting be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.