

JANUARY 24, 2022
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:

S. Piatkowski (Chairperson), J. Herring, K. Meissner, C. Millar, M. Ramsay, K. Smith, L. Tremble, C. Watson, J. Weston, C. Whetham and K. Woodcock.

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, E. Dougan-McKenzie, M. Gerard, C. Hill, N. Landry, L. Read, G. Shantz and J. Veit.

Other staff in attendance: L. Agar, S. Galliher, N. Hercanuck, R. Lam and S. Reidel.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson S. Piatkowski called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m.

Director j. chanicka shared the following statement:

External legal counsel confirmed that the board has reduced liability to the board by putting a stop to the delegation and not sharing the video, and that further the board has taken the necessary steps to reduce harm to WRDSB students, staff and community and reduce its legal exposure. The board has been advised that by taking these steps it is in adherence to board bylaws, board policies, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act and Ministry of Education directions, and as such the board has complied with its obligations and responsibilities as required by law.

Chairperson S. Piatkowski shared the following statement:

I wanted to share some perspective on the events that transpired at the Committee of the Whole meeting on January 17. I can understand that those who may not understand the realities and barriers that trans-identifying students and people face and/or those without trans people in their lives might not recognize the subtle code words that are used to marginalize them and delegitimize their existence. While some Trustees and some well-meaning members of the community may genuinely not have seen the harm that the delegate caused with what she did say, I can assure you that it was real. It was clear where she was headed. Had she been allowed to continue, the harm may well have become more apparent to all. If that had been the case, perhaps my decision to stop her presentation might have looked better to some who have questioned it, but I would have felt (and the Board would have been) responsible for that added harm. In the past week, I and others at this table have had a taste of the abuse and hatred that trans folks experience every day. While it has frankly been an awful experience, it pales in comparison to the harm that would have been caused to trans students, staff and members of the community if I had not acted as I did and when I did. The motto of the Waterloo Region District School Board is that 'our students come first, each and every one'. We must continue to uphold that in everything we do, including at our meetings. I would now call on Vice-Chair Woodcock, who also wanted to make some opening remarks

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Vice-Chair K. Woodcock shared the following statement:

I want to acknowledge that the Board is committed to ensuring that all schools create a culture of inclusivity and foster a safe and healthy environment for our students. The Ontario Human Rights Code provides that all individuals have the right to protection from discrimination and harassment arising from their gender identity or gender expression. We are committed to supporting and protecting marginalized students, staff and their families, in particular, the trans community. In this regard, I sincerely regret the discussion during the portion of the Committee of the Whole meeting that I chaired on January 17, 2022. I am committed to representing all members of the WRDSB community and to the success of all students, including trans-identifying people. I want to thank those members of the community who provided input and helped me to understand how the debate and perspectives shared during the discussion could create harm. It is my view that all students, parents, teachers and school staff have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Trustee M. Ramsay was called to order when speaking out of turn.

1. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by J Herring:

That the agenda of the January 24, 2022, Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved

-Carried-

Trustee M. Ramsay was called to order when speaking out of turn.

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

DELEGATIONS

The following delegations spoke at this evening's meeting:

- Peter Rasberry - WRDSB Outdoor Education Maple Syrup Program
- David Alton - Supportive Environments and Resources for Transgender, Non-Binary and Two-Spirit Youth
- Mitchell Avis - LGBTQ2+ Literature
- Chris Clarke - Inclusion of Transgender and Non-Binary Reading Materials
- Jodi Koberinski - Importance of Representation in Literature
- Peter Woolstencroft - Board Governance and Decision Making
- Cait Glasson - Importance of Transgender Reading Materials

Trustees were provided opportunities to ask questions of clarification after each delegation.

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

That the delegation from Peter Rasberry be referred to staff for a verbal report in February.

-Carried-

3. Moved by C. Whetham, seconded by C. Watson:

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be extended an additional thirty minutes.

-Carried-

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 4004 - EMERGENCY NEEDS-EXPENDITURES

Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard noted that this policy is outdated and no longer required as there are other mechanisms in place.

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

That the Waterloo Region District School Board rescind Board Policy 4004 - Emergency Needs-Expenditures effective January 24, 2022.

-Carried-

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 5002 - LEAVE OF ABSENCE-FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL POLITICAL CANDIDATES

It was noted that this policy only speaks to employees of the WRDSB.

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

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve Board Policy 5002 - Leave of Absence-Federal and Provincial Political Candidates as presented at the January 24, 2022, Committee of the Whole Meeting.

-Carried-

REPORTS

Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard provided a short introduction to the four reports on the agenda.

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2021-22 INTERIM FINANCIAL REPORT AND FORECAST

This report was provided for information.

The information contained in this report is based on financial results up to November 30, 2021 (Q1). The ability of staff to convey a high degree of confidence in our forecast of the year-end financial position based on three months of operations is limited; particularly in light of the uncertainty that COVID-19 introduces. Consistent with the approved budget for 2021-22, we expect the WRDSB to finish the year in a deficit position; this was confirmed through submission of our Revised Estimates to the Ministry of Education on December 15, 2021, which showed an in-year deficit forecast of \$11.6M, including board funded COVID-19 expenses of \$7.43M. The 2021-22 Q1 Interim Financial Report, comparing the budget to the forecasted year-end position was provided to trustees and key budget risks were summarized.

6. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by C. Millar:

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be extended an additional thirty minutes.

-Carried with Two-Thirds-

Trustees asked questions regarding the estimated deficit, accumulated surplus and decreased elementary enrolment.

MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS QUARTERLY UPDATE

This report was provided for information.

Current capital projects with budgets greater than \$2.5M were presented indicating the status of the project relative to the schedule, budget and scope. All projects are proceeding as planned through the design and construction stages. Construction has now started for the Saginaw Childcare addition and the new school in South East Cambridge is in the design phase. In addition, on November 23, 2021, we received approval from the Ministry of Education for a new school in the Breslau-Hopewell Crossing area.

FISCHER-HALLMAN/HURON ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BOUNDARY STUDY (PART II)

The Fischer-Hallman/Huron Elementary Schools Boundary Study (Part II) Working Group has completed the Boundary Study process and recommends implementing Scenario 1. Scenario 1 recommends boundary changes to see the 'Wallaceton' Development Area dissolved and moved from Southridge and Laurentian Public Schools to the new school at 80 Tartan Avenue. In addition, Scenario 1 would see the 'Huron Woods' community (currently at Janet Metcalfe Public School) moved to the new school at 80 Tartan Avenue.

Trustees asked questions regarding enrolment capacities and Laurentian Senior Public School.

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7. Moved by K. Smith, seconded by K. Meissner:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the elementary school boundaries and recommendations consistent with Scenario 1 described within Appendix A attached to the Fischer-Hallman/Huron Elementary Schools Boundary Study (Part II) report presented to the Board of Trustees at the January 24, 2022 Committee of the Whole meeting.

-Carried-

DEVELOPMENT AREAS ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Administrative Procedure 4992 - Temporary Student Accommodation for Development Areas allows the Waterloo Region District School Board staff to assign students from new growth areas with capacity shortfalls to schools with available space and/or room for temporary capacity. An annual status report was identified as a best practice within the revised procedure to ensure Development Area (DA) changes are implemented and communicated consistently year over year. In addition to seeking Board approval, this annual Development Area Report provides Trustees and other stakeholders with up-to-date information about the status of each DA within the Region of Waterloo.

Student Trustee K. Soror left the meeting at 10:25 p.m.

Trustees asked questions regarding the development areas listed.

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

That the Committee of the Whole meeting be extended an additional thirty minutes.

-Carried Unanimously-

Trustees continued to ask questions of clarification regarding reported development areas and warning clauses.

9. Moved by K. Smith, seconded by J. Weston:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approves the Development Areas Annual Report, 2021-2022, attached as Appendix A to the Development Areas Annual Report 2021-2022 presented to the Board of Trustees at the January 24, 2022 Committee of the Whole meeting.

-Carried-

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DISCUSSION: LINDA FABI BURSARY NAME

Chairperson Piatkowski has been in contact with former Director Linda Fabi regarding the possibility of changing the name of the bursary, which originally was a retirement gift for Ms. Fabi. Chairperson Piatkowski also spoke with former Director John Bryant who supports this change as well citing the fact that the existing award goes to students who would not normally be chosen for an academic award and expressed hopes that the WRDSB maintain the current criteria.

Trustees discussed the motion.

10. Moved by C. Millar, seconded by K. Meissner:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board rename the Linda Fabi Bursary as the Past-Directors' Bursary, while keeping the amount available to be awarded and the criteria for the award the same; and

That the selection committee be comprised of the Director, Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Past-Chairperson; and

That communications surrounding the bursary's history, include mention of its original name.

-Carried-

STAFF AND BOARD REPORTS

QUESTION PERIOD

Trustee K. Woodcock asked if the Chair had an update on the request to pause EQAO testing. Chairperson S. Piatkowski shared that all contacts with the Minister indicated that they were not going to pause EQAO at this time, expressing concerns about not having the resulting data.

Trustee K. Meissner asked if we planned to collect feedback from students and families regarding the Short Term Virtual Learning program. Associate Director L. Read agreed to take the suggestion back to the team for discussion.

Trustee J. Herring asked for further information on the recent communication regarding bus cancellations. Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard provided information on the pandemic-related issues with attracting and retaining bus drivers that has transpired. He shared that runs will be cancelled when a driver is isolating and no replacement driver is available. 90% or more of runs continue to run on time. Families are referred back to the communication to see the ways they can monitor the situation. Trustee J. Herring also asked about the cases of COVID-19 for bus drivers and if they have received their N95 masks. Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard confirmed that drivers received their masks prior to the return to in-person learning. He will also

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provide trustees with information on where they can see the bus driver COVID-19 case tracking and noted that bus drivers who work with numerous cohorts of students and a number of bus drivers would be considered higher risk.

11. Moved by C. Watson, seconded by M. Ramsay:

That Question Period be extended an additional two minutes.

-Carried-

Opposed:
 J. Weston
 K. Woodcock

Abstained:
 J. Herring
 K. Meissner

Trustee C. Watson asked that staff provide responses to a number of community questions regarding COVID-19 protocols asked of trustees and staff via email at the next COVID-19 update. Director j. chanicka indicated that staff would do their best to provide responses next week.

ADJOURNMENT

12. Moved by J. Herring, seconded by C. Whetham:

That the Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 24, 2022, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 10:56 p.m.