

**SEPTEMBER 19, 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, L. Tremble, C. Watson, J. Weston, C. Whetham and K. Woodcock.

Trustees M. Ramsay and K. Smith were unable to attend.

Student Trustees V. Raina and K. Soror 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, L. Read and A. Russell.

Other staff in attendance: M. Delisle and S. Reidel.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson S. Piatkowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**That the agenda of the September 19, 2022, Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved.**

-Carried-

**DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairperson S. Piatkowski shared regrets from Trustee K. Smith and noted that sanctions prevent Trustee M. Ramsay from attending today's meeting.

Chairperson S. Piatkowski congratulated Scott Miller, the new Associate Director of Education and Jay Fedosoff, the new Superintendent of Student Achievement and Well-Being.

Student Trustee Mentors, J. Weston and K. Woodcock, introduced the 2022-2023 Student Trustees, Vaishnav Raina and Kenzy Soror.

Trustee K. Woodcock attended the City of Waterloo State of the City address with Chairperson S. Piatkowski and J. Weston.

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Trustees J. Weston and L. Tremble attended the Youth Food Market at the Centreville-Chicopee Community Centre on September 3, 2022.

Trustee J. Weston, along with Chairperson S. Piatkowski and Trustees L. Tremble and K. Woodcock, attended the unveiling of the Every Child Matters crosswalk in Victoria Park.

Trustee Herring, with Chairperson S. Piatkowski, Trustees K. Smith, L. Tremble and J. Weston and Student Trustees V. Raina and K. Soror, attended the 15th Anniversary celebration for Muslim Social Services.

Trustee L. Tremble, Chairperson S. Piatkowski and Trustee K. Woodcock, attended the March of 1,000 Umbrellas, Walk This Way: With Stacey Kay, United Way Campaign Kick Off event.

Trustee K. Meissner expressed appreciation for staff and partners for the development and launch of the new Strategic Plan noting the consultation which occurred and student voice representation.

Chairperson S. Piatkowski, Trustees M. Ramsay, L. Tremble, J. Weston and K. Woodcock, attended the first day of school at the newly built Oak Creek Public School.

## **REPORTS**

### **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. Significant milestones, along with basic project statistics, were also provided.

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) is seeing construction cost escalations in the estimates of projects that are in the design phase with our architects. These cost estimates are exceeding benchmark funding provided by the Ministry and are as a result of global commodity price escalations in fuel and the construction materials that are used to build our schools.

Trustees received clarification regarding the sites which indicated a schedule, budget or scope concerns. It was noted that projects may require further design work in order to fit within the Ministry of Education benchmark funding. When asked about the status of the Northdale Neighbourhood Partnership project, Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard indicated that the project is stalled until funding is approved.

## **BANK BORROWING RESOLUTION**

In the normal course of business, the WRDSB borrows money to meet its operating expenditures. This is necessary because of timing differences between our collection of revenues from municipalities and the province, and our payment schedules for expenditures. Extensive capital and maintenance programs being undertaken by the WRDSB, have increased the short-term cash flow needs of the board. Staff recommend that the borrowing limit be increased to \$65M to ensure sufficient liquidity is maintained to meet short-term needs; this request is supported by the cash flow summary provided.

Trustees asked questions of clarification regarding the cash flow summary and if other school boards are similarly affected. They also offered, if required, to write to the Ministry of Education to share these concerns.

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

**That the Waterloo Region District School Board adopt the Resolution, as outlined in Appendix A of the Bank Borrowing Resolution report to Trustees, authorizing the borrowing of money to meet current expenditures of the Waterloo Region District School Board for fiscal year 2023.**

-Carried-

## **SECONDARY CLASS SIZE**

Ontario Regulation 132/12 entitled “Class Size”, is part of Ontario’s commitment to limit the Board-wide maximum aggregate average class size to 23 in secondary schools. Furthermore, the Regulation provides a consistent, province-wide method to be used by school boards in determining the aggregate average class size for secondary schools. A secondary school average class size of 22 for the 2022/23 school year complies with the Grants for Student Needs, as contained in Ontario Regulation 396/22: Grants for Student Needs – Legislative Grants for the 2022-2023 School Board Fiscal Year.

Trustees asked questions regarding the different class sizes as included in collective agreements and supports for students.

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

**That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve a secondary school average class size of 22.00, effective September 1, 2022.**

-Carried-

**QUESTION PERIOD**

Trustee K. Woodcock asked if staff would like Trustees to advocate regarding funding for capital projects. Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard shared that the funding benchmark continues to be an issue and suggested that staff would have further guidance around how best to advocate at the next Capital Projects quarterly update, after current projects are reassessed to change the scope or design to fit within the benchmarks.

Trustee L. Tremble asked if staff have an update about the traffic situation at Chicopee Hills Public School. Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard shared that Leslie Maxwell, School Travel Planning Supervisor at Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region (STSWR), has been working hard to address the concerns, providing resources and safeguards for students. Active Transportation continues to be the preferred method of transportation. Staff continue to work with the City of Kitchener and the Region of Waterloo, but no infrastructure remedies have been determined at this time. Staff continue to advocate and educate the school council and students. A further update can be provided in October. Trustee L. Tremble indicated that trustees would be happy to assist if beneficial.

Trustee J. Weston asked how the STSWR is working to address the bus driver shortage and if there is any way they would be able to give more notice to parents when buses will be cancelled. Coordinating Superintendent M. Gerard noted that unfortunately decisions had to be made late last week and staff were not able to provide as much notice as they would have liked. There are communication plans to provide further clarity regarding the cancellations, as well as more general updates for families. At this time, there are 27 routes without permanent drivers and 29 individuals are in training to become school bus operators. He advised that the bussing companies are actively seeking applicants and that staff hope to see the situation remedied by mid-October. He also noted the WRDSB's appreciation for bus drivers and the important service they provide.

Trustee C. Watson asked for more information regarding the six new Student Well-Being and Equity Advisors previously referred to as Student Well-Being Advisors in the budget. She asked about the purpose of the positions and how they compare to System Navigators and Equity Officers. Superintendent C. Hill explained how well-being and equity are intrinsically linked concepts as stated in the Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan. The plan states that ensuring equity is a necessary foundation for improving student achievement, promoting student and staff well-being, and enhancing confidence in the publicly funded school system. Superintendent C. Hill reviewed information from the Ministry of Education's curriculum resource site for program planning considerations. She noted that Student Well-Being and Equity Workers will focus on issues which address identity and bias, seek to redress barriers and marginalization, and will help students build leadership and problem-solving skills, while motivating and re-engaging them in their own learning. In doing so, Student Well-Being and Equity Workers will actively work to support the WRDSB's strategic directions of centring students, supporting their well-being, and ensuring equitable outcomes and opportunities.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Trustee J. Herring served the following Notice of Motion with support from Trustee L. Tremble:

*Whereas barriers should be removed so that all students are able to attend school; and*

*Whereas some parents have advised that for various reasons, it is often difficult for students to find transportation to and from school; and*

*Whereas active transportation and alternative routes to school continue to be encouraged; and*

*Whereas an increased focus on the environment is encouraging the use of public transportation; and*

*Whereas reductions in fares for elementary and secondary students were eliminated in July 2021, and the Affordable Transit Program (ATP) does not apply to everyone;*

*It is recommended:*

***That Waterloo Region District School Board Trustees request a report exploring the feasibility of partnering with the Region of Waterloo (and/or the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, Wilmot & Woolwich) to provide free bus passes for secondary school students as well as free transportation for students from Kindergarten to age 14 (currently free for children under 4) as currently being modeled in the program in place in Kingston between the City and the Limestone District School Board; and***

***That the possibility of partnering with local businesses to assist with ongoing stable funding for the program also be investigated; and***

***That the existence of possible ongoing stable funding supports that might be in place to encourage public and active transportation be explored; and***

***That a report with the results from these investigations and all costs associated with the program, be provided to the Board of Trustees as soon as possible and as scheduled by the Agenda Development Committee.***

This Notice of Motion will be scheduled by the Agenda Development Committee.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

4. Moved by L. Tremble, seconded by J. Weston:

**That the Committee of the Whole Meeting of September 19, 2022, be adjourned.**

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.