

MARCH 20, 2023
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. in the Education Centre Boardroom, with the following members in attendance: J. Weston (Chairperson), B. Cody, C. Johnson, F. Meissner, S. Piatkowski, M. Radlein, M. Ramsay, C. Watson and K. Woodcock.
Virtual Attendees: M. Snyder and M. Waseem.

Student Trustees V. Raina and K. Soror (virtual) were in attendance.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: j. chanicka (Director of Education and Secretary), L. Agar, D. Ahluwalia, V. Collis, R. Dallon, E. Dougan-McKenzie, C. Hill, N. Landry, D. Liebermann, S. Miller and G. Shantz.

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson J. Weston called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

That the agenda of the March 20, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved. with the addition of a delegation from Julia Malott on Preferred Names and Pronouns.

-Carried-

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairperson J. Weston welcomed Director j. chanicka back to the Boardroom. Director j. chanicka provided a short welcome for the new Senior Team members, Superintendent N. Landry, Superintendent V. Collis, Senior Manager L. Agar and Superintendent M. Newlands.

Chairperson J. Weston recognized the local students who won the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation Student Achievement Awards. Morouje Sherif won the Prose and Poetry, Intermediate, 9-10 Academic Award and Erik Steeves won the Visual Arts, Visual 9-12 Non-Credit Award.

Trustee K. Woodcock toured Laurelwood Public School. This school recently experienced a flood over the winter holidays. Trustee K. Woodcock acknowledged the hard work of facilities

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staff on the remediation. It was also Luau Day with activities organized by the Grade 8 students for the school.

Trustee K. Woodcock provided greetings from the Board of Trustees at the March 15, 2023 Facility Services Professional Development Day.

Student Trustee V. Raina attended the International Women's Day breakfast held by the Canadian Federation of University Women, Cambridge Chapter, with Trustees B. Cody, C. Johnson, F. Meissner, S. Piatkowski, M. Radlein, J. Weston and K. Woodcock.

Trustee M. Radlein attended the Crestview Public School Science Fair with Trustees J. Weston and K. Woodcock.

Trustee S. Piatkowski announced that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association's Annual General Meeting will be held on June 8-10, 2023, in Collingwood, with registration opening soon. He noted that the call for resolutions is out and trustees with proposed resolutions should notify the Agenda Development Committee.

DELEGATIONS

The following delegations spoke at this evening's meeting:

- Adrienne Barrett - Support for Open Letter
- Cristina Fernandes - Motion: Request for Report on eBooks, Surveys & Curriculum
- Jacki Yovanoff - Motion: Request for Report on eBooks, Surveys & Curriculum
- David Todor - Transparency, Communications & Accountability
- James Saunders - Age Appropriateness in the Creation and Selection of Books
- Anita Brooks Kirkland - Challenges to Books in School Library Collections
- Mike Miller - Challenges to Books in School Library Collections
- Julia Malott - Preferred Names / Pronouns

Trustees asked delegations questions of clarification.

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

That the delegation from Cristina Fernandes be forwarded to staff for information and to respond to the questions posed.

-Defeated-

Opposed:
C. Johnson
F. Meissner
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Snyder
M. Waseem

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K. Woodcock

Near the halfway point into the delegation from David Todor, Trustee K. Woodcock called a Point of Order concerned that the content of the delegation was against the human rights policy and causing harm to students and the public watching the meeting. After clarification was received that this book is available in secondary school libraries, Chairperson J. Weston ruled against the Point of Order and allowed Mr. Todor to continue his presentation.

Student Trustee K Soror called a Point of Information, asking for information on the author. Chairperson J. Weston stated that the Student Trustee could ask this after the presentation was completed. The presentation resumed.

Trustees discussed a motion to refer the delegation from David Todor to staff. Trustee C. Watson requested a recorded vote. During the discussion, Trustee S. Piatkowski called a Point of Order asking that fellow trustees not mischaracterize why a trustee may not vote in favour of the motion. Chairperson J. Weston voted in favour of the Point of Order.

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

That the delegation from David Todor be forwarded to staff to respond to the questions directly to the delegate.

-Defeated-

In Favour:

B. Cody
M. Ramsay
M. Waseem
C. Watson

Opposed:

C. Johnson
F. Meissner
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Snyder
K. Woodcock
*V. Raina
*K. Soror

* Student Trustees votes are recorded for the purpose of public record and for accountability to the student body; however, it is recognized that “a student trustee is not a member of the Board” (Education Act, Section 55 (2))

Trustee C. Watson called a Point of Order that she is hearing from members of the public that the Delegation from David Todor was being censored. The Boardroom Technician confirmed that the live-stream has a small audio period where the delegation was quiet, but that it was still audible and the closed captions continued to identify what was said. Both Trustee M. Snyder and Student Trustee K. Soror, who were attending virtually, confirmed this statement.

Trustees discussed a motion to refer the delegation from Julia Malott to staff. Trustee C. Watson requested a recorded vote. Trustee K. Woodcock called a Point of Information clarifying for

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trustees and the public that the Board of Trustees is responsible for policies and that procedures are developed by staff to implement policies.

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

That the delegation from Julia Malott be forwarded to staff for information and to respond to the questions posed.

-Defeated-

In Favour:

B. Cody
M. Ramsay
C. Watson

Opposed:

C. Johnson
F. Meissner
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Snyder
M. Waseem
K. Woodcock
*V. Raina
*K. Soror

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5. Moved by C. Johnson, seconded by C. Watson:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board extend the meeting an additional thirty minutes to 10:00 p.m.

-Carried-

During questions of clarification to delegation Julia Malott, Trustee C. Watson called a Point of Order that Trustee S. Piatkowski’s question was not that of clarification. Chairperson J. Weston ruled in favour of the Point of Order and asked that the question be rephrased.

After the delegations and questions of clarification were complete, Chairperson J. Weston called a recess at 9:42 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 9:49 p.m.

STAFF FOLLOW UP

CEDAR CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL FRENCH IMMERSION

This report was provided for information.

This report was presented in response to the delegation at the February 13, 2023, Committee of the Whole meeting. The first French Immersion class (Grade 1) was formed at Cedar Creek Public School in 2017. The program was scheduled to progress to Grade 7 in the 2023/2024 school year; however, due to low enrolment in all grades, the difficult decision was made not to proceed to offer French immersion (FI) for Cedar Creek Public School students at the intermediate level. This decision was made in accordance with Section 7.4.2 of Administrative Procedure 1000 - French Immersion Elementary. The situation at Cedar Creek Public School is consistent with the trend we see in FI programs across the district, where high levels of interest and enrolment exist at the time of entry, but enrolment declines as students progress through the grades.

Trustees asked questions about retention strategies and the single entry point into French Immersion.

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Associate Director G. Shantz shared that all three policies recommended for approval are governed by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and require annual approval. He shared that at this time the legislation has not changed.

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 1002 - OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Trustee K. Woodcock shared that the three policies were the first to flow through the new Policy Working Group review process.

6. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by F. Meissner:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve Board Policy 1002 - Occupational Health and Safety as presented at the March 20, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting.

-Carried-

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 1004 - HARASSMENT

Trustees discussed the proposed language change from “parents” to “families/caregivers” in Section 3.1. Associate Director G. Shantz shared that this is consistent with other policies and does not create a change in legal obligation regarding harassment nor is there a legal reason to

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prevent the use of the work parent. It was noted by trustees that the Special Education Advisory Committee is in support of the language families/caregivers.

A motion to amend the policy to use the language “families/caregivers/parents” was discussed.

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

That the Waterloo Region District School Board amend section 3.1 of Board Policy 1004 - Harassment to use the language “families/caregivers/parents”

-Defeated-

Opposed:
C. Johnson
F. Meissner
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Snyder
M. Waseem
K. Woodcock
*V. Raina
*K. Soror

* Student Trustees votes are recorded for the purpose of public record and for accountability to the student body; however, it is recognized that “a student trustee is not a member of the Board” (Education Act, Section 55 (2))

Trustees continued discussion on the policy noting that the Policy Working Group is developing a list of standard language and anticipates this discussion to occur again as the Board of Trustees continue this work.

8. Moved by S. Piatkowski, seconded by C. Johnson:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve Board Policy 1004 - Harassment as presented at the March 20, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting.

-Carried-

Opposed:
B. Cody
M. Ramsay
C. Watson

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9. Moved by C. Johnson, seconded by M. Ramsay:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board extend the meeting an additional thirty minutes to 10:30 p.m.

-Carried-

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 1009 - VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

10. Moved by S. Piatkowski, seconded by F. Meissner:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve Board Policy 1009 - Violence in the Workplace as presented at the March 20, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting.

-Carried-

Opposed:
B. Cody
M. Ramsay

Abstained:
C. Watson

REPORTS

INTERIM FINANCIAL REPORT AND FORECAST AT FEBRUARY 28TH

This report was provided for information.

The information contained in this report is based on financial results up to February 28, 2023 (Q2). The forecast for the 2022-23 school year remains an in-year deficit (\$8.03M), but the forecasted deficit is higher than the deficit forecasted as part of the original budget. The increase is attributed to higher utilization of short-term sick leave, increasing our expenditure forecast for supply staff costs by \$2.7M (11.8%). There are a number of variables that could impact our financial position over the next six months, including changes in enrolment, utilities, staffing (vacancies), professional development and supply staff costs. Staff will continue to monitor expenditures across all areas of the board's operations and will provide another update in June 2023. It was noted that the supply cost expenditure issue is being experienced province-wide.

Trustees asked questions regarding the supply staff budget, Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding for next year, the current year's deficit and any budgetary contingency plans. Superintendent N. Landry reminded trustees that the WRDSB would not be eligible to have a deficit next year.

MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS QUARTERLY UPDATE

This report was provided for information.

Current capital projects with budgets greater than \$2.5M are outlined in Appendix A and are presented indicating the project status relative to the schedule, budget and scope. Significant milestones and project statistics are also presented. All projects are proceeding through their stages. Cost estimates exceed benchmark funding provided by the Ministry of Education. Tendering the project will occur once the Ministry approves the additional funding allocations.

Manager R. Dallan shared that this is the first time he recalls that the WRDSB has had to request additional funding and that this is a common theme throughout the province.

Trustees asked questions about advocating for funding noting the letter sent to the Minister of Education on February 23, 2023 and Chairperson J. Weston agreed to bring up the issue at the next Chairs' call with the Minister of Education. Trustees asked questions regarding the different project status', if other boards have received approvals for additional funding and if this trend is anticipated to continue.

11. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by C. Watson:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board extend the meeting an additional thirty minutes to 10:30 p.m.

-Carried-

RECRUITMENT EVENT FOR INDIGENOUS, BLACK & RACIALIZED EMPLOYEES

Associate Directors G. Shantz and S. Miller provided an update on the upcoming Recruitment Event For Indigenous, Black & Racialized Employees on March 29, 2023. They shared that the event is one of many recruitment strategies used by the WRDSB and is one of the 23 different recruitment events the WRDSB participates in. This will be the third year for this successful event. The WRDSB is endeavouring to attract the most qualified candidates who also represent the lived experience of all students. Both Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum 165: School Board Teacher Hiring Practices and Board Policy 5000 support such recruitment strategies. This event is consistent with work of other governing bodies such as the Ontario Public Service. Potential candidates have provided positive feedback on the event and this is the first year negative comments have been received. This work continues to be guided by Ministry of Education policies and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Recent survey data indicated that our workforce does not represent the student body. White students are reflected in the workforce with over 90% of staff being white. This gap has been identified by the Ministry of Education at a provincial level and boards have been encouraged to diversify their workforce. It was noted the majority of the negative comments are coming from outside the Region of Waterloo. Through consultation with legal counsel, the WRDSB is on legal grounds to hold such events. All candidates must meet the requirements of a job posting and are not hired solely on the basis of racial identity. A diversified workforce better supports the students in the WRDSB.

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Trustees asked questions about the supply staff shortage and covering staff absences. One trustee expressed concerns regarding what they consider an exclusionary practice noting other underrepresented groups such as male teachers in elementary schools. Associate Director G. Shantz noted that this is one piece of a multifaceted approach to hiring practices. Positive feedback regarding the environment fostered at the event was noted. Many trustees expressed support for the event and the efforts to diversify the workforce.

Trustees discussed a motion to extend past 11:00 p.m. as not all agenda items have been discussed. Continuation required unanimous approval.

12. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by F. Meissner:

That the Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 20, 2023, be extended an additional thirty minutes to 11:30 p.m.

-Defeated-

Opposed: M. Ramsay

ADJOURNMENT

With the defeat of the motion to extend further, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.