

MAY 15, 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, S. Piatkowski, M. Radlein, M. Ramsay, M. Waseem, C. Watson and K. Woodcock.

Student Trustee V. Raina was in attendance and Student Trustee K. Soror was not in attendance.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: j. chanicka (Director of Education and Secretary), V. Collis, C. Dey, E. Dougan-McKenzie, D. Liebermann, S. Miller and G. Shantz.

Other staff in attendance: N. Carse, M. Mayer, S. Reidel and S. Vieira.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson J. Weston called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Chairperson J. Weston shared a few words regarding the sudden passing of Trustee Fred Meissner on May 9, 2023 and the great loss this is for the WRDSB, the community and his friends and family. Director j. chanicka also spoke about Fred Meissner on behalf of staff and also shared sentiments from students and staff.

The meeting paused for a moment of silence.

Chairperson J. Weston called a five minute recess at 7:14 p.m.

Chairperson J. Weston resumed the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by M. Waseem:

That the agenda of the May 15, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved.

-Carried-

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairperson J. Weston shared regrets from Student Trustee K. Soror.

Trustee K. Woodcock attended the State of the Township address in Woolwich.

Trustee S. Piatkowski reminded trustees that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association is looking for a volunteer from WRDSB to sit on the Public Property Assessment Network Scholarship Committee.

DELEGATIONS

The following delegation spoke at this evening's meeting:

- Julia Malott - Student Equity Concerns

Trustees asked questions of clarification.

A recorded vote was requested on a motion to refer to staff.

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

That the WRDSB refer the delegation to staff to report back to trustees; and

That the report back to trustees include initiatives that address financial inequities.

-Carried-

In Favour

B. Cody
C. Johnson
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Ramsay
M. Waseem
C. Watson
J. Weston
K. Woodcock
V. Raina*

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POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 1014 - PRIVACY PROTECTIONS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Trustees asked questions regarding review of the policy and legislative language. It was noted that the Policy Working Group will discuss the concept of legal reviews on future policies and where that may be required.

3. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by M. Radlein:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve Board Policy 1014 - Privacy Protections and Access to Information as presented at the May 15, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting.

-Carried-

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 2007 - BOARD ADVERTISING EXPENSE

4. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by M. Radlein:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve Board Policy 2007 - Board Advertising Expense as presented at the May 15, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting.

-Carried-

REPORTS

STAFF WELL-BEING STRATEGY

This report was provided for information.

On January 23, 2023, the Board of Trustees approved a motion requesting a report that explores the structures that currently exist to support staff well-being, explores further support that may be needed and considers how staff can be supported when impacted by circumstances outside the workplace.

Current structures and services in place to support staff well-being include the Employee and Family Assistance Program and providing staff with access to resources, training and health promotion. Employee Wellness is not currently resourced to support a more robust staff well-being strategy as they are focused on critical business continuity functions. Staff have begun to gather feedback from a diverse group of system leaders using the Guarding Minds @ Work - National Standard for Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace as a framework. Through this process, we have been able to identify key workplace factors that both align to and support the Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP). As a next step, staff will administer the Guarding Minds at Work Survey in June to all staff.

The following categories have been identified as ways in which we can move forward with actionable recommendations:

- Direct consulting support for system and school leaders to develop a site-based/department plan that fosters and promotes healthy and safe workplaces
- Development of a Staff Well-Being Strategy
- Networking and mentoring programs for staff
- Professional leadership development and training with a focus on supporting leaders who, alongside their teams, are able to build positive and psychologically safe workplace cultures

- Continued focus on human rights and equity training
- Creation of an onboarding strategy for new employees
- Creating safe spaces with identity factors at the forefront
- Formalize a debriefing process for staff that have been involved in crisis situations
- Workflow review process to reduce workload for staff and leadership group

The post-COVID era has brought about a more polarized society, particularly as it relates to social justice issues. As staff endeavour to create safe, caring, and inclusive spaces in their schools, classrooms and workplaces, their efforts are often met with a range of responses that can be characterized as supportive, questioning, critical, abusive or violent. This interaction unfolds in a predominant way over social media and has created more complex staff well-being challenges particularly as it relates to psychological safety. Staff have reported feeling unsafe, harassed and targeted. As an employer, there is an obligation to support staff on a variety of issues and challenges, some of which are experienced outside of the workplace. In addition to ensuring staff feel safe at work, and in some cases putting in place a safety plan, support would also come in the form of training, workshops, and access to experts or professionals in their respective fields. Building staff capacity to safely engage in social media and respond to social media harassment requires a thoughtful and informed strategy. Staff will gain further insight on this topic through the Guarding Minds @ Work all-staff survey that will be issued in June.

Trustees asked questions regarding the Guarding Minds @ Work survey, which will be reported on in October 2023, financial implications, community supports and working definitions for psychological safety and harassment. It was also confirmed that there are no financial requests at this time, but it will be reviewed as part of the 2023-2024 budget.

STAFF AND BOARD REPORTS

TRUSTEE VACANCIES

Chairperson J. Weston announced that the Board of Trustees has two trustee vacancies to fill - the vacancy in Waterloo / Wilmot resulting from the resignation of Marie Snyder and the vacancy in Woolwich / Wellesley resulting from the passing of Fred Meissner.

There are two options available to trustees, hold a by-election or appoint individuals to the positions. Trustees were provided with the information from the last three vacancies which occurred in 2012, 2017 and 2020. All three vacancies were filled by appointment, two through an application process and one through selecting the runner up in the election. She noted that the WRDSB would be responsible for any associated costs of running a by-election. The estimated cost provided by the City of Waterloo was \$214,000 and it was noted there would be additional costs from the townships.

As in past vacancies, Chairperson J. Weston determined that the discussions would be handled in two parts, firstly, a decision on whether to hold a by-election or an appointment process.

A motion was moved to fill the two vacancies by an appointment process. Discussion ensued on the motion. Trustee discussion reflected on the potential low voter turnout of a summer by-election, noting the already low turnout for the last municipal election.

A Point of Order was called by Trustee S. Piatkowski suggesting that the discussions focus on determining if the Board will fill the vacancies by by-election or appointment first, as in previous years. The Chairperson ruled in favour of the Point of Order.

Trustees continued to discuss the motion, some noting that they find it difficult to decide, without determining what appointment process would be used. A motion to postpone was moved and discussed by trustees. A recorded vote was requested.

A motion to Call the Question was withdrawn.

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

That the Waterloo Region District School Board postpone discussion on the decision to appoint trustees to allow for discussion to take place on what the appointment process will look like.

-Defeated-

In Favour

B. Cody
M. Ramsay
C. Watson

Opposed

C. Johnson
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Waseem
J. Weston
K. Woodcock
*V. Raina

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Trustees resumed discussion on the motion to select an appointment. Trustees discussed the potentially low voter turnout, the financial implications of a by-election, and the timelines to fill the positions. Some trustees were of the opinion that they would only support selecting the runner up and would not be supportive of an interview or application process. The costs and time associated for candidates in a by-election was also discussed.

An amendment to the motion was moved to appoint the runners up for both vacant seats indicating that they felt this was the most democratic process. Trustees discussed the amendment. A recorded vote was requested.

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

That the Waterloo Region District School Board amend the motion to include “...by which the Board of Trustees appoints the next person in line from the 2022 election for both vacant seats if they continue to be qualified; and if those individuals are not qualified, the Board of Trustees appoints the next runner up.”

-Amendment Defeated-

In Favour

B. Cody
M. Ramsay
C. Watson

Opposed

C. Johnson
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Waseem
J. Weston
K. Woodcock
*V. Raina

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Trustees returned to the main motion and a recorded vote was requested.

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

That the Waterloo Region District School Board fill the two trustee vacancies, Waterloo / Wilmot and Woolwich / Wellesley, by an appointment process.

-Carried-

In Favour

C. Johnson
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Waseem
J. Weston
K. Woodcock
V. Raina*

Opposed

B. Cody
M. Ramsay
C. Watson

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A motion to strike an ad hoc committee to develop an appointment process was moved and discussed. Discussion included suggestions that previous processes could be utilized by the ad hoc committee to assist in their work. It was confirmed that the process developed by the committee would require approval by the Board of Trustees. Not all trustees were in favour of

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the use of an ad hoc committee and continued to advocate for selecting the runner up from the previous election. A recorded vote was requested.

8. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by M. Radlein:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board strike an ad hoc committee of three trustees to develop an appointment process to follow to fill both trustee vacancies; and

That a report of the process be provided to trustees at the May 29, 2023, Board Meeting.

-Carried-

In Favour

C. Johnson
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Waseem
J. Weston
K. Woodcock
V. Raina*

Opposed

B. Cody
M. Ramsay
C. Watson

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A motion to move to a Special Board meeting to ratify the decision to strike an ad hoc committee was moved. It was noted that this motion would require two-thirds of trustees to vote in favour to approve. A recorded vote was requested.

9. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by M. Radlein:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board move into a Special Board Meeting to ratify the decision to strike an ad hoc committee.

-Carried with two-thirds-

In Favour

C. Johnson
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Waseem
J. Weston
K. Woodcock
V. Raina*

Opposed

B. Cody
M. Ramsay
C. Watson

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Trustees rose at 9:31 p.m. to report to a Special Board Meeting.

Chairperson J. Weston resumed the Committee of the Whole meeting at 9:33 p.m.

10. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by M. Radlein:

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

-Carried-

Opposed:
S Piatkowski
M. Waseem

It was noted that the Chairperson would put a call out for ad hoc committee members tomorrow.

MOTION: KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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

That the motion be rescheduled for a Committee of the Whole Meeting, in June of 2023, as determined by the Agenda Development Committee.

-Carried-

ADJOURNMENT

12. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by B. Cody:

That the Committee of the Whole Meeting of May 15, 2023, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m.