

**NOVEMBER 13, 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, S. Estoesta, C. Johnson, J. Meissner\*, S. Piatkowski\*, M. Radlein, M. Ramsay, M. Waseem\*, C. Watson and K. Woodcock.

\*Virtual Attendees

Student Trustees A. Awan and C. Dong were in attendance.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: j. chanicka (Director of Education and Secretary), D. Ahluwalia, M. Armellini, E. Dougan-McKenzie, C. Hill, N. Landry, S. Miller and G. Shantz.

Guests: Benoit Bourgault and Leslie Maxwell, Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region.

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 K. Woodcock, seconded by C. Johnson:

**That the agenda of the November 13, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved.**

-Carried-

**DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Trustee S. Estoesta laid a wreath on behalf of the WRDSB at the Waterloo Remembrance Day Ceremony.

Trustee M. Ramsay provided greetings from the Board at the Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate and Vocational School commencement.

Trustee M. Radlein visited Howard Robertson Public School last week.

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Trustee C. Johnson, Trustee K. Woodcock and a number of other trustees attended the OPSBA Southwestern Ontario joint meeting hosted by WRDSB at Oak Creek Public School.

Trustees C. Johnson and K. Woodcock attended the Greening of Grandview Public School.

Trustee B. Cody laid a wreath on behalf of the WRDSB at the Cambridge cenotaph.

Trustee J. Weston laid a wreath on behalf of the WRDSB at the Preston cenotaph.

**DELEGATIONS**

The following delegations spoke at this evening's meeting:

- Blanca Siguenza - Impact of Stories on Mental Health

**STAFF FOLLOW UP**

**WRDSB STATEMENT - *ANTICIPATED SEPTEMBER 20 PROTESTS***

Director j. chanicka provided trustees with a response to questions raised regarding the statement released by the WRDSB entitled "Anticipated September 20 Protest". Director j. chanicka quoted directly from the statement, identified guiding legislation, support for families, noted the possible impact it may have on students and denounced all forms of hate. He indicated that as a large organization with many leaders, it is a consistent practice to not sign messages from a specific individual as it represents the interests of the organization. Director j. chanicka went on to clarify that statements from him solely, are signed by the director. He shared that staff aimed to address concerns ahead of time due to the open claims made by the group organizing the 1 Million March 4 Students. It states on their website: "Uniting diverse backgrounds and faiths, we share a resolute purpose: advocating for the elimination of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) curriculum, pronouns, gender ideology and mixed bathrooms in schools. As a symbol of our commitment, students are encouraged to participate in a nationwide school walkout on that day." and "Our Mission: We are brothers and sisters in humanity standing up to free our children from the bondage of indoctrination. Breaking the system designed to sexualize our children." Director j. chanicka shared that as an organization, the WRDSB is bound to uphold the law, the Education Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code. He went on to note that just because someone disagrees with the legislation and the Ontario Human Rights Commission, it doesn't mean they are right. He stated that the WRDSB is legally compelled to ensure the Human Rights of students are protected. He quoted a speaker from the protest who provided untrue and factually incorrect information about the education system. He shared that it is his duty as director to remind everyone that there is a duty to all children to ensure we are not promoting ideology that leads to hate and harm. He noted that the WRDSB statement was never about or directed to the Muslim community but addressed the words of the organizers specifically. He concluded by noting that he does not see a need to retract the statement made and reiterated the final paragraph of the original statement: "We are all in relationship with one another. By working together with compassion and recognizing our shared humanity, it is possible for us to build a better school system where all children belong and where their human

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rights are upheld. We look forward to a future of togetherness alongside a community that ensures the success, safety and belonging of all students and learning spaces.”

Trustees discussed the response from Director j. chanicka regarding the statement.

Trustees discussed the motion moved to have the Board of Trustees issue a public apology for the statement.

A recorded vote was requested.

2. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by S. Estoesta:

**That the Waterloo Region District School Board call the question.**

-Carried-

In Favour:

S. Estoesta  
C. Johnson  
J. Meissner  
S. Piatkowski  
M. Radlein  
M. Waseem  
J. Weston  
K. Woodcock  
\*A. Awan  
\*C. Dong

Opposed:

B. Cody  
M. Ramsay  
C. Watson

\* 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)).

A recorded vote was requested.

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

**That the WRDSB Board of Trustees issue a public apology to participants of the Million Parent March on September 20, 2023, for the comments made by the WRDSB questioning the motives of the participants.**

-Defeated-

In Favour:

B. Cody  
M. Ramsay  
C. Watson

Opposed:

S. Estoesta  
C. Johnson  
J. Meissner  
S. Piatkowski

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**REPORTS**

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OF WATERLOO REGION (STSWR)  
2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT**

This report was provided for information.

Superintendent N. Landry provided trustees with background information on the creation of the transportation consortium, STSWR. Benoit Bourgault, General Manager of STSWR, provided trustees with the highlights from the 2022-2023 school year, including safety initiatives, contract compliance and performance management, bus driver recruitment and productivity initiatives. He reviewed the key performance indicators related to safety, quality, service and cost. He also reviewed the steps taken to improve safety such as extended stop arms, seatbelts, and school safety zones. He reviewed the performance measurements related to student ride times, vehicle utilization, school travel planning, traffic issues and travel modes. B. Bourgault also provided a summary of appeals to transportation decisions followed by the overview summary for 2022-2023 and objectives for the 2023-2024 school year. He concluded his presentation with the financials from 2022-2023.

Trustees asked questions regarding collisions, taxi costs, daily driver absences, the school safety zone advocacy, seatbelt training for new riders, stop arm cameras and schools with traffic concerns.

Leslie Maxwell, School Travel Planning Supervisor at STSWR, provided trustees with a presentation on School Travel Planning. She reviewed the mandate, values and framework. She reviewed the school and student participation in active travel programs, services provided to schools, and achievements. She provided trustees with the funding partners and financial expenditures.

Trustees asked questions regarding cycling education, reading level and languages for resources, how Drive to 5 works and about student drivers.

## **ANNUAL AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT - 2022-23**

This report was provided for information.

The report included the members of the Audit Committee, committee tasks, meetings, governance and external auditors. The report also reviewed the 2022-2023 Regional Internal Audit Team (RIAT) audits and engagements.

### **2022-23 AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Superintendent N. Landry thanked the Financial Services team for their hard work in preparing the financial statements. Controller M. Armellini provided trustees with background information regarding the financial statements, the responsibility of management and the audit. She also referenced the Independent Auditor's report, statement of financial position and applicable new Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) standard - PS 3280- Asset Retirement Obligation (ARO).

Trustees asked questions regarding what is covered under Other Expenses.

4. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by C. Johnson:

**That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended August 31, 2023, as recommended by the Board Audit Committee.**

-Carried-

### **2022-23 FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT**

This report was provided for information.

In an effort to support the Board in fulfilling their fiduciary duties, staff provide quarterly financial updates on in-year spending forecasts relative to the budget. These updates identify potential risks and opportunities that may be on the horizon, as well as the strategies staff have in place to address the identified items. These actions are intended to support the Board in making evidence-based decisions and fulfilling their governance responsibilities.

Superintendent N. Landry shared that the deficit was 0.46% of the operating budget and reviewed key changes to the revenues such as an increase in student enrollment and additional in-year funding announcements by the Ministry of Education. He reviewed the key changes in expenses such as an increase to short-term supply costs and non-operating expenses such as Capital Asset write-off of \$1.2M, PPE and HEPA Filters \$1.3M, ARO liability \$2.9M and the ETFO Remedy Payment.

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Trustees asked questions regarding the HEPA filters and it was noted that the WRDSB continues to be in compliance with Ministry of Education directions for ventilation and air quality as outlined on the WRDSB website. At trustee request, Superintendent N. Landry will provide Trustee K. Woodcock with information on our supply cost funding shortage for use at the Ontario Public School Boards' Association Advocacy Day on November 28th at Queen's Park.

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

**That the Committee of the Whole Meeting be extended an additional thirty minutes to 10:00 p.m.**

-Carried-

**2022-23 TRUSTEE EXPENSES**

This report was provided for information.

Board Policy 3001 Travel, Meals, Hospitality – Trustees directs staff to present, annually, a public report regarding Trustee expenses that were reimbursed during the previous fiscal year. Trustee expenses have been reviewed by our external auditors, Grant Thornton

**QUESTION PERIOD**

Trustee M. Radlein asked where the WRDSB is in addressing issues connected to suspensions and expulsions: in particular, addressing the over-representation of particular demographic groups. Associate Director S. Miller shared a number of strategies employed by the WRDSB including building staff capacity and working with community agencies. He also noted the reduction in length of time students are spending out of schools. In the short term, the WRDSB continues to provide professional development and has set timelines for community engagement and hiring practice goals.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no future agenda items.

**ADJOURNMENT**

6. Moved by S. Estoesta, seconded by J. Meissner:

**That the Committee of the Whole Meeting of November 13, 2023, be adjourned.**

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.