

MARCH 18, 2024
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), C. Johnson, J. Meissner, S. Piatkowski, M. Radlein, M. Ramsay, M. Waseem, C. Watson and K. Woodcock.

Trustees B. Cody and S. Estoesta were unable to attend.

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), M. Armellini, V. Collis, R. Dallan, E. Dougan-McKenzie, N. Landry, 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 7:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

That the agenda of the March 18, 2024, Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved with the addition of a Delegation from Blanca Siguenza on the Motion to Amend Board Policy 3004 - Holding of Public Meetings and the removal of the Delegation from Akbar Arkani.

-Carried-

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairperson J. Weston shared regrets from Trustees B. Cody and S. Estoesta.

STUDENT TRUSTEE ANNOUNCEMENT

Trustee C. Johnson shared that Feiyang Luo and Devansh Lakhanpal were elected as WRDSB's Student Trustees for the 2024-25 school year. Feiyang is currently in Grade 11 at Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute and was elected as Student Trustee in the north area, while Devansh, a Grade 10 student at Jacob Hespeler High School, was elected in the south area.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairperson J. Weston wished Ramadan Mubarak to the community noting that at 7:30 p.m. a recess would be called to allow for individuals the opportunity to break their fast this evening.

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Trustees C. Johnson, J. Meissner, S. Piatkowski, M. Radlein and K. Woodcock visited the Alternative and Continuing Education site.

Trustee M. Radlein visited Stanley Park Senior Public School, Forest Hill Public School and Glencairn Public School.

Trustee J. Meissner attended the Robotics Team Open House at Elmira District Secondary School.

Trustees C. Johnson, M. Radlein and Student Trustee A. Awan attended the International Women's Day Breakfast.

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

DELEGATIONS

Trustee M. Waseem joined the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

The following delegations spoke at this evening's meeting:

- Marwan Abu-daka - Censorship of Palestinian Students
- Elaine Scharlach - Response to Question posed by Trustee Ramsay Re: Delegation Process
- David Todor - Motion to Amend Board Policy 3004
- Blanca Siguenza - Motion to Amend Board Policy 3004

Chairperson J. Weston called for a recess after the delegation from Marwan Abu-daka at 7:23 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:45 p.m.

Student Trustee A. Awan joined the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

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

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

That the Waterloo Region District School Board refer the delegation from Elaine Scharlach to staff to respond to the delegate.

-Carried-

Opposed:
C. Johnson
Abstained:

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J. Meissner
S. Piatkowski
*C. Dong

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Trustee S. Piatkowski called a Point of Order asking that Trustees be allowed to perform their duty without being shouted at by the public gallery. Chairperson J. Weston asked that the public gallery maintain decorum and refrain from shouting at trustees.

The delegation from David Todor was paused after five minutes and he was asked to remain on the topic of the boardroom and overflow room capacity and reasons for restriction. He was allowed to continue on topic. The delegation was paused a second time at six minutes where he was once again asked to remain on the topic indicated on his delegation request. Trustee C. Watson called a Point of Order sharing her belief of the reason he was listing decisions amounting to restrictions in the boardroom. Chairperson J. Weston ruled that he was allowed to list but that he was going further off topic beyond just listing the decisions. The Chairperson allowed the delegation to continue once again asking that he stay on topic. Chairperson J. Weston called an end to the delegation after seven minutes as the delegate refused to follow the delegation rules and remain on the topic he submitted for delegation. The gallery was once again asked to maintain decorum.

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 project status relative to the schedule, budget, and scope. Significant milestones, along with basic project statistics, were also presented. All projects are proceeding through their stages. As mentioned in previous reports, staff continue to see construction cost estimates exceeding benchmark funding provided by the Ministry of Education. Staff will tender the projects once the Ministry approves the additional funding allocations. The cost escalations are attributable to global commodity price increases for fuel and the construction materials used to build our schools. For the new school in South Kitchener, staff are currently awaiting Site Plan Approval and a Building Permit from the City of Kitchener.

INTERIM FINANCIAL REPORT AND FORECAST

This report was provided for information.

Consistent with the approved budget for 2023-24, staff expect the WRDSB to finish the year in a deficit position; this was confirmed through the submission of our revised estimates to the

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Ministry of Education on December 15, 2023, which showed an in-year deficit forecast of \$6.2M, or 0.72% of operating revenues. This planned deficit is less than 1% of the board's operating revenues and therefore, the board is compliant with ministry requirements. The 2023-2024 Q2 Interim Financial Report, comparing the budget to the forecasted year-end position, was provided. The following are a list of risks and challenges that staff will closely monitor:

- Staff replacement costs (short-term sick leave)
- Enrolment fluctuations
- Forecasting utility fluctuations
- Ministry announcements

Trustees asked questions regarding elementary enrolment appearing lower than originally forecasted and it was noted that the final enrolment numbers would not be available until financial statements are presented in the fall.

AD HOC AIR QUALITY POLICY COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Ad Hoc Air Quality Policy Committee has met 4 times and developed a draft Air Quality Policy. The WRDSB Policy Working Group has a process for the development of new policies that outlines a requirement for committee consultation for new policies prior to their approval by the Board of Trustees.

It was noted that the consultation process would take approximately two months to complete.

3. Moved by J. Meissner, seconded by M. Radlein:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board extend the reporting deadline for the Ad Hoc Air Quality Policy Committee until such time as the new policy has completed the consultation process outlined by the Policy Working Group.

-Carried-

BOARD REPORTS

OPSBA CALL FOR POLICY RESOLUTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Each year, member boards have an opportunity to submit proposals for amendments to the OPSBA Constitution and By-Laws for consideration by the Board of Directors. Trustee M. Radlein's proposed Constitution and By-Law Amendment Proposal regarding Black Trustees' Caucus was provided to Trustees.

4. Moved by M. Radlein, seconded by C. Johnson:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve and support the Constitution and By-Law Amendment Proposal submission to OPSBA by Trustee M. Radlein regarding Black Trustees' Caucus as outlined in Appendix A.

-Carried-

MOTION: AMEND POLICY - 3004 HOLDING OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

This Notice of Motion was served at the February 26, 2024, Board Meeting by Trustee C. Watson with support from Trustee B. Cody. Trustee C. Watson introduced the motion indicating her belief that additional seating should be provided. Trustees discussed the motion sharing varying views on the motion regarding the disruptive behaviour of the public present earlier in the meeting, the inclusion of staff seating in the room, 30 public seats typically being more than required for interested attendees, the availability of the livestream and recordings for the public to watch.

A recorded vote was requested.

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

That the Waterloo Region District School Board amends Policy 3004 Holding of Public Meetings to include an overflow room that would accommodate parents/guardians and community members who aren't able to sit in the boardroom because of the limited seating.

-Defeated-

In Favour:

M. Ramsay
C. Watson

Opposed:

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

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ADJOURNMENT

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

That the Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 18, 2024, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.