

MARCH 17, 2025
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: M. Radlein (Chairperson), B. Cody, S. Estoesta, C. Johnson, J. Meissner, S. Piatkowski, M. Ramsay, C. Watson, J. Weston and K. Woodcock.

Trustee M. Waseem was unable to attend.

Student Trustee D. Lakhanpal was in attendance and Student Trustee F. Luo was not present.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: S. Miller (Director of Education and Secretary), M. Armellini, E. Dougan-McKenzie, A. Gaymes-San Vicente, N. Landry, B. Lemon, M. Newlands and C. Sagar.

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson M. Radlein called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. Moved by S. Estoesta, seconded by J. Weston:

That the agenda of the March 17, 2025, Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved.

-Carried-

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairperson M. Radlein shared regrets from Trustee M. Waseem and Student Trustee F. Luo.

Chairperson M. Radlein visited the Rosemount Family of Schools on March 7 to learn about the alternative education programs.

ANNOUNCE NEXT YEAR'S STUDENT TRUSTEES

Chairperson M Radlein announced tha Krishna Aarya Trivedi, a student at Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute, was elected in the North riding and Kinjal Kaur, a student at Galt Collegiate Institute, was elected in the South riding. Their term will start on August 1, 2025.

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

DELEGATIONS

There were no delegations scheduled to speak.

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

REVIEW OF BOARD POLICY 3010 - POLITICAL CANDIDATE VISITS DURING FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

2. Moved by S. Estoesta, seconded by J. Weston:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve Board Policy 3010 - Candidate Visits During Federal, Provincial and Municipal Elections as presented at the March 17, 2025, Committee of the Whole Meeting.

-Carried-

REPORTS

ELIZABETH ZIEGLER PUBLIC SCHOOL UPDATE

This update was provided for information.

Director S. Miller thanked the Elizabeth Ziegler Public School (PS) community for their patience during the school closure, indicating that further communications were shared with the impacted school communities this afternoon. He also thanked trustees and staff for their efforts. He shared that the WRDSB has made the difficult decision of closing the school for the remainder of the year and has developed a plan for students to return to in person learning.

English Stream, Full Day Kindergarten, and Extended Day Program staff and students will remain at the Elizabeth Ziegler PS property in portables. French Immersion (FI) Program staff and students will move to Sandowne PS in classrooms and portables. Congregated Alternative Continuum of Education (ACE) Program staff and students will move to JW Gerth PS. Congregated Enrichment class staff and students will move to Brigadoon PS. These plans allow for teaching timetables to remain intact and prioritizes student achievement and well-being. Putting the plans in place will take time and students will be in remote learning up to and including March 28th. Staff acknowledge that this is not the ideal learning environment and may be an inconvenience to some families. Director S. Miller once again thanked everyone for their support.

Trustees asked questions about out of boundary requests, physical supportive equipment for the ACE classrooms and future communications.

INTERIM FINANCIAL REPORT AND FORECAST

This report was provided for information.

The information in the report is based on financial results up to February 28, 2025 (Q2). The forecast for the 2024-2025 school year remains a balanced position. However, the WRDSB continues to face financial pressures including utility costs, increased expenses for supplies and services, higher costs for contractual services and pressures related to sick leave. There are several variables that could impact the financial position over the next six months, including

changes in enrolment, utilities, staffing, professional development and supply staff costs. Staff will continue to monitor expenditures across all areas of operations and will provide another update in June 2025.

Trustees asked questions regarding the snow removal costs, forecasted enrolment and supply costs.

MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS QUARTERLY

This report was provided for information.

Current capital priority 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.

For the new school in South Kitchener, February weather conditions have affected construction progress. Staff and the general contractor are working strategically to have all necessary school spaces occupiable for September for the forecasted enrollment.

Trustees asked questions regarding the budget for Breslau Hopewell Crossing and the partial opening of South Kitchener.

BOARD REPORTS

MOTION: CONSULTATION

This Notice of Motion was served at the January 10, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting by Trustee C. Johnson with support from Trustee S. Estoesta. Trustee C. Johnson introduced the motion.

Trustees discussed an amendment to the motion to include “(iv) and that the town hall meeting gives parents/guardians, students, staff and community members an opportunity to ask questions and share their concerns in a public forum.” The discussion on the amendment included hesitancy on making the town hall a space to share concerns when there is a process for concerns available to families, the reason for the motion coming forward, statements that the current motion is vague and confirmation that this motion is about consultation to be used for the Strategic Plan.

An amendment to the amendment was proposed replacing “and share their concerns in a public forum” with “collaborate and provide guidance on the Strategic Plan.” Trustees discussed this amendment to the amendment including concerns that this defeats the purpose of the amendment suggesting that it changes the type of town hall, and the difference between this and the next motion on the agenda.

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

That the question be called on the amendment to the amendment.

-Carried-

4. Moved by S. Estoesta, seconded by J. Weston:

That “and share their concerns in a public forum” be replaced by “, collaborate and provide guidance on the Strategic Plan” in the amendment so that it now read:

“(iv) and that the town hall meeting gives parents/guardians, students, staff and community members an opportunity to ask questions, collaborate and provide guidance on the Strategic Plan.”

-Amendment to the amendment defeated-

Opposed:

B. Cody
C. Johnson
J. Meissner
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
C. Watson
J. Weston
K. Woodcock

Abstained:

M. Ramsay

A recorded vote requested on the amendment.

5. *At the March 24, 2025, Board Meeting the amendment was withdrawn with approval by the Board of Trustees*

Trustees returned to discussion on the main motion. A new amendment was proposed to include “(e) that a report on the feedback received from the consultation be brought to the Board in 2026.” Through discussion a friendly amendment was made to the amendment changing it to read “(e) that a report that includes statistical information on the feedback received from the consultation be brought to the Board in early 2026.”

6. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by J. Meissner:

That the motion be amended to add: “(e) that a report that includes statistical information on the feedback received from the consultation be brought to the Board in early 2026.”

-Amendment Carried-

Trustees returned to discussion on the amended main motion. Discussion included concerns with the current Strategic Plan and an amendment to include assurances regarding the statistical feedback.

A recorded vote was requested on the amendment.

7. *At the March 24, 2025, Board Meeting the amendment was withdrawn with approval by the Board of Trustees*

Trustees returned to discussion on the main motion. This discussion included statements in favour of the current Strategic Plan and this motion to consult.

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

(a) That the Waterloo Region District School Board consult with the broader community to get input regarding the educational needs of our students; and

(b) That we use multiple forms of communication to connect with as many members in our larger community as possible:

(i) That we reach out to all students, families, parents, legal guardians and caregivers using a variety of engagements such as town hall meetings, virtual and asynchronous methods.

(ii) That we reach out to all staff in every school and at the Education Centre.

(iii) That we reach out to the many community organizations who work both directly and indirectly with the WRDSB; and

(c) That staff lead the consultation process with Trustee involvement.

(d) That this process begins in the Spring of 2025.

(e) that a report that includes statistical information on the feedback received from the consultation be brought to the Board in early 2026.

-Amended Motion Carried-

Opposed:
B. Cody
C. Watson

Abstained:
M. Ramsay

MOTION: TOWN HALL

This Notice of Motion was served at the January 10, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting by Trustee C. Watson with support from Trustee M. Ramsay. Trustee C. Watson introduced the motion by referencing an opinion article calling for a town hall meeting for parents to ask questions.

Trustees discussed the motion including concerns about how the opinion article referred to having a town hall to answer questions that the Board may not legally be allowed to answer and logistical concerns were raised.

A Point of Order was called by Trustee K. Woodcock when Trustee M. Ramsay was speaking about previous decisions. She noted that the statements were heading toward confidential issues and should cease. Chairperson M. Radlein asked that trustees return to discussion on the motion.

Discussion on the motion continued. A Point of Order was called by Trustee K. Woodcock that Trustee C. Watson should not be stating that other trustees should have the same opinion as her on this motion. Chairperson M. Radlein heard the Point of Order and moved to the vote.

A recorded vote was requested.

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

That that the WRDSB Trustees direct that a Town Hall Meeting be scheduled in a central location to answer questions and concerns of students, parents/guardians, staff and community members; and

That the Town Hall meeting be scheduled no later than the end of February 2025.

-Defeated-

In Favour:

B. Cody
M. Ramsay
C. Watson

Opposed:

S. Estoesta
C. Johnson
J. Meissner
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
J. Weston
K. Woodcock
*D. Lakhanpal

* 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))

MOTION: BYLAW REVIEW ON COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETINGS

This Notice of Motion was served at the February 24, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting by Trustee J. Weston with support from Trustee S. Estoesta.

Trustees discussed the motion including concerns about no longer having a committee of the whole where all trustees are present. Trustees were informed that through the many meetings

provincial advisory groups have had with the Ministry of Education (Ministry), the Ministry does not plan to amend the legislated changes to attendance requirements resulting from Bill 98. Many school boards in Ontario are making the same changes proposed for the ad hoc committee to recommend.

A motion to amend the main motion to include a letter of advocacy to the Ministry of Education was moved, seconded but withdrawn. It was further discussed whether the committee or the Board could still write a letter.

Trustees continued discussion on the motion including concerns about the new attendance requirements and ensuring continued transparency.

10. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by S. Estoesta:

That the WRDSB form an Ad Hoc Committee to review the Board's current committee structure and recommend a committee structure that would align with the new legislation and allow the board to fulfill their legislative responsibilities by means other than a Committee of the Whole; and

That the Ad Hoc Committee review and consider the committee structures of other comparative boards; and

That the Ad Hoc Committee recommend changes to Sections 16 and 17 of the WRDSB Bylaws (July 2024) as well as any other sections which reference Committees of the Whole to align the bylaws with the recommended committee structure; and

That the Ad Hoc Committee reports back to the board in May 2025.

-Carried-

QUESTION PERIOD

Trustee C. Watson asked about a particular slide presentation from a classroom that may have references that it is incorrect "that parents have the right to know," requesting additional information on the context. Director S. Miller asked Trustee C. Watson to provide him with the name of the school and a copy of the slide in question so that he can follow up.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following Notice of Motion was served by Trustee C. Watson with support from Trustee B. Cody:

Whereas parents are concerned that their elementary children do not have continuous supervision during nutrition breaks,

Whereas some students have had physical altercations during nutrition breaks without supervision in the room,

MARCH 17, 2025
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

Whereas “some teachers are supervising more than one classroom, lunchroom, or portable at a time by roaming the halls or space between rooms,”(OPC)

Therefore be it resolved that the WRDSB trustees request a written report about the current challenges around supervision during nutrition breaks, and that staff also explore supervision standards of comparative boards and that the report also contain potential solutions around supervision within the elementary panel,

And that the report also include the supervision protocol of students with food allergies, and students in portables,

And that this report be presented to the board of Trustees no later than the first Committee of the Whole in June 2025.

This motion will be scheduled for a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

11. Moved by J. Meissner, seconded by C. Johnson:

That the Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 17, 2025, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.