

WRAPSC Minutes

October 3, 2017

Attendance:

The meeting began at 7:05pm. Laurie Tremble, WRAPSC/PIC co-chair led the meeting.

Motion: That the agenda for the October be approved.

Motioned – Glenn Anderson

Seconded – Ryan Barnett Cowan

Motion passed.

Motion: That the minutes of May 2, 2017 be approved.

Motioned: Erica Beck

Seconded: Ryan Barnett Cowan

Motion passed.

Co-Chairs Report

Laurie began the report with a description of PIC and WRAPSC. PIC, the Parent Involvement Committee, is a government mandated committee of the board. All boards have a PIC. Our PIC is composed of 14 parents (5 of whom also sit on the WRAPSC steering committee), the Director of Education, a trustee, three staff reps and a community rep. The purpose of PIC is to encourage parent engagement to enhance student well-being and success. PIC does this by providing advice to the board on parent engagement and barriers to parent engagement, by running events for parents, and by communicating with and supporting school councils. It provides advice through feedback to trustees on policy, meetings with staff, having representatives on other board committees such as the School Year Calendar Committee and the Internet Content Filtering Committee and similar activities. PIC runs a full-day parent conference every spring supported by a PRO grant. PIC supports school councils by working with WRAPSC.

WRAPSC, which has been around for about 12 years longer than PIC, is a parent-run organization that supports school councils in our board. It achieves this by providing communication to and from parents and the board/ministry, by maintaining a Facebook account and having regular meetings bringing in speakers of interest to members. WRAPSC is run by a steering committee of 8 parents, 5 of whom also sit on PIC.

We have a number of openings on the Steering Committee this year including:

- WRAPSC/PIC co-chair. Laurie is done as co-chair after this meeting. This position is for someone who will sit on both WRAPSC and PIC.
- Two WRAPSC/PIC parent-at-large positions. People in these positions will sit on both WRAPSC and PIC.
- WRAPSC co-chair. This position is for someone who will only sit on the WRAPSC steering committee.
- WRAPSC secretary. This person will take minutes at the meetings and sit only on the WRAPSC steering committee.
- WRAPSC communications. This person will manage WRAPSC attendance and the WRAPSC Facebook account and will sit only on the WRAPSC steering committee.

Anyone interested in any of these opportunities is asked to meet at the break with Laurie.

Parents Engaged in Education

“Parents Engaged in Education was formed by committed parent leaders, teachers and principal who are focused on providing resources to school councils across the province of Ontario.

We are also exploring new ways to engage parents and excite them about becoming involved in their children’s education.

Our mission is to empower parents with the skills and knowledge to not only support their own child, but, to make the educational experience at school better for all children.”

This organization is hosting a full-day school council training symposium on Saturday, October 28 from 9-3:30pm at Bill Crothers Secondary School in Markham. For more information go to dreambig.parentsengagedineducation.ca.

People for Education

Founded in 1996, People for Education is an independent charitable organization that conducts research, makes policy recommendations, and facilitates an extensive communications strategy to support public dialogue about public education.

They are running their annual conference on Saturday, November 11 at the Rotman School of Management in Toronto. The keynote speaker is Dr. Jean Clinton. Dr. Jean Clinton is an internationally recognized child psychiatrist, advocate for children's issues, and expert on brain development. She is also an education advisor to Ontario's Premier and Minister of Education. For Jean, the secret to success for our education system, and for all of our work with students, lies in integration, inter-relationships and "connecting the dots." She will talk about the interconnections between academic achievement, well-being, and the competencies and skills that all children need for long-term success; and why it's important to support collaboration, relationship-building and interconnected thinking about our goals for education and programs for children and young people. There will be many different sessions offered throughout the day, centered around the theme "I want that in my school!" The cost for an individual to attend is \$70.

Speaker: Ian Gaudet, Controller, Facilities Services

Mr. Gaudet was provided with a list of questions we have received about facilities. Questions such as why are there portables at new schools, who is in charge of playground upgrades and maintenance, and more were asked prior to the meeting. Mr. Gaudet's PPT presentation will be provided along with the minutes.

The board has 120+ sites (some sites that aren't schools) equaling about 8,000,000 square feet. Facilities responsibilities include maintenance, cleaning, utilities, grounds, rentals, project delivery, new builds, renovations, and more.

Budgets for facilities are approved in May-June. The total facilities budget is about \$54 million and is primarily driven by enrolment. Money is received in various pockets such as grants for school renewal and others. The age and condition of the buildings in our system also play a role in determining the budget.

When our board wants to build a new school, they must provide a business case for the need to the Ministry. It is up to the Ministry to decide if the project will be funded and for how much.

Our board works with partners in the cities and region along with developers to determine where new schools will be built. Our planning and facilities staff will request certain sites (usually about 10 acres on flat land) but may not be given the site they want (might get 5 acres on a hill). Every site is different and presents different challenges and opportunities to facilities staff. Starting a new build may be held up by funding (waiting for ministry approval) or other issues such as services (sewer etc.).

New school size is determined based on long-term projections for the area. When a new school is opened there are usually lots of students but that number generally drops as the community ages and fewer young children live in the area. That is why you will often

see portables on new school sites. The new build will include a plan for where portables will be placed. Generally, the board likes new JK-8 schools to hold about 500-700 students, JK-6 about 350-525 students and secondary about 800-1400 students, aiming for 1100.

Question: Does the board no longer build 7-8 schools?

Answer: There is no explicit policy not to, but they haven't built one in years. Likewise, our board has never built a 7-12 or K-12 school like other boards have.

Question: What happens when there are portables on a site for many years, if the population never drops like the board expected? How long will they leave those portables there?

Answer: Staff are aware of these situations and will likely request an addition. However, funding priority will be given to new schools and those students who currently don't have a building at all. We are a growth board, which means we still need new schools.

Moving on the topic of maintenance, minor maintenance is done by staff. These are usually repairs that cost less than \$5000 and are funded through operational funding. Major maintenance of projects costing more than \$10,000 are usually considered capital improvements and include things such as new windows and HVAC or program enhancements such as new tech rooms and science labs. These are funded through capital funding.

Facilities staff use a 5-year plan for the pupil accommodation grant. There are two hoppers: major maintenance and program needs. Facilities staff, led by 4 general managers, meet annually with all school administrators to review their sites and discuss their "Top 5" lists of needs for their physical spaces. Outside consultants also do regular reviews of our sites and all schools across the province as part of the Ministry of Education's work to inform their business case for requesting funding from other ministries. All the projects identified through these reviews are put into the hoppers along with the funding received from the Ministry and then projects are prioritized and scheduled as funding permits.

Question: Can parents do some maintenance and other work themselves, such as grading a field?

Answer: There are risk issues that cause concern with the board's insurance providers that can significantly increase the board's insurance costs. There have been issues with this type of thing in other boards in the past. There are workplace safety issues etc. that make this difficult to do.

Question: How can parents get something like air conditioning for their school?

Answer: You need to work with your principal and get it on their “Top 5” list. In the past, facilities staff did maintenance on a regular cycle and would come in to replace carpet even if it wasn’t an urgent need and something else was more urgent. Now they listen more to the principals through their “Top 5” lists to ensure that the most important work is getting done first.

Question: How come something like a broken toilet seems to linger as a maintenance issue for months?

Answer: It takes us longer to get to everything than we want, but we have limitations due to staff and funding. We prioritize projects and that may not be a priority for the principal. Anything parents think should be a priority should be discussed with the principal.

Program needs and requested by the principal. They apply for these projects using a standard application form that is reviewed on their merits and their alignment with board and ministry priorities and plans by a committee of their peers and facilities staff. Projects that receive a green light from this committee are prioritized and put into the queue.

The School Renewal Budget is used for program needs, major maintenance, accessibility and special ed needs. The board must approve spending of this budget and staff try to split this money equally between program needs and major maintenance.

Question: WCI has a theatre but the seats are in bad shape. Why is this a lingering issue?

Answer: This is a challenging situation due to changes in code since the theatre was originally built. Facilities staff are aware of the issue and are trying to come up with a solution.

Question: Where does the money from rentals go? Can it be used toward the maintenance of the facility that was rented?

Answer: The board is non-profit and makes no money on rentals. In fact, when factoring wear and tear, they lose money. Renters, who are often community organizations and non-profits themselves do not like when the board raises rental rates to try to cover costs. All rentals are organized by the rental department and not the school. The money received goes into the board accounts and not the school’s account.

Legislation and board policy dictate that our board facilities should be fully accessible by 2025. We are on target to meet that. We had a 5-year plan that just finished up last year and through which the board completed a lot of accessibility work. WCI and Sunnyside present very challenging situations and solutions for those sites haven’t been found yet. All new builds are fully accessible.

School grounds are the responsibility of the Foreperson of Sites who manages repairs of grounds and parking lots. Work orders for this work will be submitted by the school and are carried out year-round for small jobs and during the summer for big jobs. Playgrounds are built by third parties and become board assets once completed. Facilities staff are responsible for assessing the safety of playgrounds and will close unsafe playgrounds. Schools have to raise funds to replace or repair playgrounds.

The board has a document titled *Design Guidelines for K-12 Outdoor Play and Learning Environments* that parents and councils can refer to when they are planning a playground fundraiser. The link to that document is: https://www.wrdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/WRDSBGuidelines.K_12-Outdoor-Play.pdf.

All school sites have a soccer pitch and a tarmac play area. Ball diamonds are being removed as many schools prefer not to play baseball due to the risks of swinging bats. Likewise, many tracks at secondary schools are being removed as they are hard to maintain to proper and safe standards. The board is moving to a regional approach to tracks. Jacob Hespeler has a very good track that the board is trying to maintain. Similar tracks will possibly be put in one school in Kitchener and one in Waterloo so that each community has one facility that can provide that amenity.

Room sizes are as follows: regular classrooms are between 750-800 square feet, FDK classrooms are about 1200 square feet and include a washroom. Classrooms are loaded as follows: FDK – 30 students per room (this includes before and after school care); JK/SK – 26 students per room (during the school day); Grades 1-3 – 20 students; Grades 3-8 – 23 students; Grades 9-12 – 21 students.

According to the Ontario Building Code, there must be one washroom fixture for every 30 males and every 26 females. Our board adheres to that. New builds include all gender washrooms with appropriate signage. Often these washrooms are also accessible with things such as hand rails and lifts. It is the policy of the board and consistent with the Human Rights Code that we try to protect transgender students from discrimination by providing all gender washrooms and change areas. When there have been concerns staff including facilities and equity and inclusion staff have worked with schools to come up with solutions such as providing multiple stalls in change rooms to allow privacy for whoever wants it. A pilot project for transgender washroom signage at ECI and GCI in 2017 got good reviews from parents. Students already knew the washrooms were there.

Gym space is an issue in some schools. Generally, the board provides a single gym for schools with 400 or fewer students. Bigger schools get a double gym. However, there are some schools that don't have this and the board is working on providing a double gym for every school.

All portables are now air conditioned and staff are working on providing air conditioning for all porta packs. The goal for the near future is to have the admin area and the library in all schools air conditioned as a minimum. All new schools and new additions are air conditioned. About 50% of space in board facilities is currently air conditioned.

There are specific rules for what a council can raise funds for. In general, you can't raise funds for something that the ministry provides funding for such as additions, textbooks, or anything that is considered a capital improvement to a school building. School grounds improvements are a big thing that many schools raise money for. Big projects should be coordinated with facilities staff.

The new Groh public school was in the news a lot and much was made of the innovative design. What about Chicopee Hills? Here are some of the innovative design elements of that school:

1. Artificial turf soccer field
2. Gym floor, 8.3 mm Tarkett
3. Glass basketball backstops
4. Retractable stage
5. LED lighting
6. Interior bike storage
7. Underground waste bins
8. In ground irrigated field
9. In class sound field system
10. Professional design work including mascot
11. Work to reduce water runoff from the school grounds
12. Multimedia room including a "green screen"
13. Learning commons and maker space
14. Art gallery in the lobby
15. Underslab insulation to reduce heat loss
16. And much more!

Question: What about bike storage? What is interior storage?

Answer: We know bikes get stolen from schools, especially when bike racks are in out of the way places. Interior storage is needed at some sites. We also need to replace and move the bike storage at other schools. Another new thing that has come up is the need for skateboard and scooter rack. Councils can raise funds for these things.

Question: When do things get fixed? How long does it take after a work order is submitted?

Answer: The board gets about 20,000 work orders per year and has 55 staff to deal with them. Occasionally some get lost, but the system is improving. Staff have to prioritize and health and safety issues get dealt with first.

Question: There are lots of kids in Baden and area and it continues to grow. Are there any plans to expand WO to deal with that?

Answer: Not sure but planning is aware of the issue.

Question: What about school signs or beautification like murals? Can councils fundraise for this?

Answer: We try to provide electrical to where signs would be and at some new schools, signs are part of the budget. We've seen many murals done by students but not usually done by others. You may need to go through an approval process if using an outside artist.

Question: Could things like ball diamonds be leased to pay for the cost of maintaining them?

Answer: It may be hard to find a community partner to lease something like that especially in a neighbourhood with declining enrolment. Declining enrolment generally means the whole community may be losing people. Rentals are done through the rental department and not the school. Sometimes the board partners with municipalities to share parks, ball diamonds etc.

Question: Whose job is it to maintain landscaping? Sometimes it looks overgrown and wild.

Answer: Volunteers should be able to do this.

Question: Could facilities staff come to a council meeting if they have questions or concerns?

Answer: Yes.

BREAK

After the break, the new steering committee was introduced as follows:

Melyssa Jenkins – PIC/WRAPSC co-chair

Angelica Allen – WRAPSC co-chair

Glenn Anderson – PIC/WRAPSC treasurer

Laurie Tremble – PIC/WRAPSC parent member

Ryan Barnett Cowan – PIC/WRAPSC parent member

Kristin Wagner – PIC/WRAPSC parent member

Mandi Bond – WRAPSC communications coordinator

We are still looking for a WRAPSC-only member to act as secretary.

Laurie led a discussion about the structural relationship between PIC and WRAPSC. This discussion began last year, but for those who are new or may not remember, Laurie provided the following recap.

The PIC governance subcommittee undertook a review of PIC bylaws last year starting with membership bylaws. There were a number of issues the committee was trying to solve with this review, specifically:

- Issues of equity in the membership process for parent members;
- Issues of workload for PIC parent members;
- Issues of meeting timing for PIC meetings.

It quickly became apparent that any changes the committee wanted to make would have to involve WRAPSC.

Laurie went through the issues one by one.

First, is the issue of equity in the membership process for PIC parent members. As mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, PIC and WRAPSC work collaboratively and share some membership. Specifically, 5 parent members of PIC also sit on the WRAPSC steering committee. The process for becoming a parent member on PIC is different depending on whether you are PIC-only or PIC/WRAPSC. If you are PIC-only, you need to complete an application form, which includes several short answer questions and two references, one of which is a WRDSB employee. Applicants must also attend a 30-minute interview with the membership subcommittee consisting of 3 or 4 PIC members. We routinely get many more applications than we have open positions. To become a PIC/WRAPSC parent member, you must indicate your interest in volunteering for the WRAPSC steering committee, either at the first meeting of the year or by email. Assuming there are not more people volunteering than there are spots, you are then on the steering committee. In the past several years, WRAPSC has not had more volunteers than were needed and some years not all the spots were filled. Amongst the steering committee, decisions are made about who will also sit on PIC, who will co-chair both committees and who will be treasurer. The governance subcommittee felt that it was unfair for some parent members to get a spot on PIC without going through the more rigorous application process that PIC-only members go through.

Second, workload is an issue in particular for PIC/WRAPSC parents. For those members, they must commit to being the WRAPSC rep on their school council (to qualify for the WRAPSC steering committee), the WRAPSC steering committee, PIC and PIC subcommittees. This means council meetings, WRAPSC general assembly meetings, WRAPSC steering committee meetings, PIC meetings, and PIC subcommittee meetings at a minimum. Few people have that much time for volunteer work which means we are burning out some members and making it difficult for new members to take the step to join the committee.

Third is the issue of meeting timing. Because PIC's membership process doesn't occur until after WRAPSC's steering committee membership process, PIC can't have its first meeting of the year until late October or early November (WRAPSC meets early October, PIC applications are open for one more week, followed by reference checks and interviews). New members have indicated they find the first couple of PIC meetings (late October/early November and early December) to be difficult to engage in as they are learning what their role is. Often, new PIC members don't begin to feel comfortable until the late January meeting. At this point, half of the year has already gone by and it is difficult for PIC to get work done.

The proposed solutions that the governance subcommittee came up with include:

1. WRAPSC and PIC separate completely. There would be no shared membership and both committees would be free to run themselves and their meetings as they please. Ideally, they would attempt to keep each other updated on their activities;
2. WRAPSC becomes a subcommittee of PIC. The chair or 1 co-chair of this subcommittee would be a PIC member. Other members could be from PIC or not. This subcommittee would be responsible for communicating information to councils, soliciting feedback from councils and organizing regular meetings for council members. This would be a standing committee, meaning that it would continue to exist year over year;
3. WRAPSC is separate but one or more parent member(s) of PIC sit on WRAPSC's steering committee as liaisons. PIC members would be chosen first and two to three would sit on WRAPSC as well. This is similar to option 1 with a formalized liaison role to ensure communication from one committee to another.

After careful consideration, the PIC governance subcommittee recommends the second proposed solution, wherein WRAPSC becomes a subcommittee of PIC for the following reasons:

1. As a completely separate organization, WRAPSC likely will not continue to receive the following benefits from the board: budget of \$1000; free room rentals; use of board website and staff to update it; contact information for school council chairs or members.

The last point, that WRAPSC won't get contact information for school council members, is particularly concerning. Laurie confirmed with staff that they will not give WRAPSC this information, although PIC will receive this information in the form of access to a google group prepared by communications staff with information provided by principals. PIC will not be allowed to share this information with WRAPSC.

This would leave WRAPSC in a difficult position. School staff would not be allowed to share this information even if WRAPSC did the legwork to contact all schools. WRAPSC would have to try to speak to parents individually, but schools likely won't even give WRAPSC the names of council members. It's unclear how WRAPSC would be able to gather this information every year to keep their communications database up to date.

If PIC has access to this information and WRAPSC does not, PIC will become the way that staff use when trying to contact parents. PIC will use its own database as well rather than going through WRAPSC. It is also part of PIC's mandate to communicate with and support school councils (as laid out in O.Reg 612), so PIC will likely choose to use their own more current and accurate database to do this.

2. At previous meetings, some WRAPSC members have indicated a desire to remain arm's length from the board so they can differ from official board policies in matters where parents may not have the same priorities as Board officials. They also suggested that WRAPSC being "independent" also meant the Board could not screen speakers, although to be clear this has not happened in the past. Avoiding a bureaucratic maze was another factor. Other Boards with a WRAPSC equivalent do appoint parent members to the PIC or vice versa.

Laurie explained that WRAPSC has never been, during the time she has been involved, an organization that lobbies or criticizes the board. Instead, its mandate is to support school councils and to help them do the work of engaging the parents in their community in their children's education.

Also, school councils are technically committees of the board. They are created and bound by O.Reg 612 just as PIC is. Councils are already bound by Ministry and Board policy and bureaucracy. The PIC governance subcommittee doesn't think it is appropriate for board committees (such as councils) to be represented by an organization that is completely separate from the board and its policies etc. But without accurate and up to date council contact information, it would be difficult for WRAPSC to claim it is the voice of councils anyway.

Basically, the concern of the PIC governance subcommittee is that a separate WRAPSC, whether completely separate or with one or two PIC liaisons on the steering committee, will have to shift its focus from school councils to parents in general. This may be a valuable organization to have in the region; however, it won't serve PIC's need to fulfill its mandate of communicating with and supporting school councils. If WRAPSC separates, the governance subcommittee will recommend the creation of a

new PIC subcommittee to communicate with and support school councils using PIC's council google group. That would mean there would be two organizations serving the same purpose in the region, one of which is 'official' and the other, which is not. This could create confusion for staff, councils and parents. In addition, if resources such as staff time for presentations, funding etc. were stretched thin, those resources would likely go to the official committee (PIC) and not the unofficial one (WRAPSC).

Laurie reported that she would like to request that a vote on the PIC governance subcommittee's recommendation be on the agenda at the November WRAPSC meeting as time is needed to rewrite PIC bylaws and terms of reference and the WRAPSC charter to reflect any changes decided on. Laurie gave the same presentation to PIC and will be requesting a vote at the November PIC meeting as well.

If any members have questions about this issue, feel free to email wrapsc@gmail.com or PIC at pic@wrdsb.ca.

The meetings was adjourned at 9:10pm.