

Public Schools Branch
Fortieth Public Board of Directors Meeting
March 28, 2022

Minutes

The Board of Directors for the Public Schools Branch met on Monday, March 28, 2022 virtually via Webex.

Present: Bethany MacLeod, Board Chair
Mary Jane Ready
Norman Beck

Also in Attendance:

Norbert Carpenter, Director of Public Schools Branch
Karen Redmond, Manager of Policy and Planning
Sheri Gauthier, Confidential Board Secretary
Dave Gillis, Director of Transportation and Risk Management
Janet Perry-Payne, EAL Program Administrator
Craig Clark, Student Services Mental Health Lead
Becky Chaisson, Director of Corporate Services
Angie MacCaull, Human Resources Manager
Kelly Drummond, Director of Human Resources, Corporate Planning and Principal Support
Diane Arsenault, French Consultant
Blake Crockett, Financial Services Coordinator

1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. Board Chair MacLeod welcomed all in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

03/28/01 It was moved by Norman Beck and seconded by Mary Jane Ready that the agenda be approved as presented. Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

3.1 MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 21, 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

03/28/02 It was moved by Norman Beck and seconded by Mary Jane Ready that the minutes of the January 21, 2022 Board of Directors Meeting be adopted as presented. Motion carried.

3.2 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No business to report at this time.

4. POLICY UPDATE

4.1 POLICY REVIEW – 603 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

03/28/03 It was moved by Mary Jane Ready and seconded by Norman Beck that the Board has reviewed policy 603 Occupational Health and Safety and no changes are needed at this time. Motion carried.

4.2 PROPOSED RESCISSION – 609 COVID-19 VACCINATION INFORMATION AND TESTING POLICY

03/28/04 It was moved by Mary Jane Ready and seconded by Norman Beck that the proposed policy be rescinded. Motion carried.

5. FINANCIAL INVOICES

5.1 INVOICE 331305 – OCTOBER FLEET CHARGES

03/28/05 It was moved by Mary Jane Ready and seconded by Norman Beck that invoice #331305 dated November 25, 2021 in the amount of \$200,285.04 for October fleet charges for the Charlottetown garage be approved as presented. Motion carried.

5.2 INVOICE 331885 – NOVEMBER FLEET CHARGES

03/28/06 It was moved by Mary Jane Ready and seconded by Norman Beck that invoice #331885 dated December 22, 2021 in the amount of \$151,413.44 for November fleet charges for the Charlottetown garage be approved as presented. Motion carried.

5.3 INVOICE 332994 – DECEMBER FLEET CHARGES

03/28/07 It was moved by Mary Jane Ready and seconded by Norman Beck that invoice #332994 dated February 11, 2022 in the amount of \$145,043.19 for December fleet charges for the Charlottetown garage be approved as presented. Motion carried.

6. DIRECTORS REPORT

(The complete Directors' Report will be filed with the official minutes).

Director, Norbert Carpenter, shared the following report.

The 2021-22 school year is entering its final three months and it has been another year filled with constant change and uncertainty. However, we are very proud of our students and staff for their collective efforts. Our schools have continued to operate after a period of remote learning in January. The Public Schools Branch (PSB) is grateful for the support we have received by our partners and stakeholders which has allowed for teaching and learning to continue.

We are encouraged by the steps toward living with COVID-19 as outlined by the Province's *Moving On* Plan. We will continue to work closely with the Chief Public Health Office as we move through the next few weeks to ensure student and staff safety. Timely updates will be provided to our school communities.

We recently hired a new Senior Communications Officer. Jenn Redmond will be joining our Team on April 6th. Jenn has previously worked with Holland College and most recently was working with the 2023 Canada Winter Games. Sparrow McGowan has been in the role for the past 18 months, but is moving back to Ottawa. Sparrow will be deeply missed. We are currently working to overhaul the Public School Branch website and hope to have it completed and live by April 30th.

Good things happening in schools

Students and staff at a number of schools have been showing their support for the people of Ukraine, including collecting donations of goods, holding a blue and yellow day, and fundraising. For example, two students at Birchwood Intermediate gave out small sunflower pins for a donation, while students and staff at KISH did a rapid fundraiser, raising \$1600 in 9 minutes.

The students in a Grade 4 class at West Royalty Elementary School put together a video on anti-bullying as part of last week's Pink Shirt Day. The video was shared on the PSB Facebook page and reached almost 15,000 people.

As a small recognition for the amazing work done by PSB staff, we distributed chips to all our staff for Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week, letting them know they are "all that and a bag of chips!" Also, as part of the week of celebration, PEI teacher Jennifer Holdway's video project was highlighted on the Government of PEI website. Ms. Holdway created more than 100 videos to help students who are learning English as an additional language.

Students at Tignish Elementary school continue to benefit from a unique biology lesson. This year, they received 110 salmon eggs, which have recently hatched.

Policy and Planning Update

Over the past number of months the PSB Mask Use procedure and the COVID-19 Vaccination Information and Testing policy have been updated to reflect the guidance of the Chief Public Health Office. As we move forward, the COVID-19 Vaccination Information and Testing policy is no longer needed as the related CPHO Order has been rescinded.

The Guidelines for Respecting, Accommodating, and Supporting Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation in our Schools was issued in December 2021 by the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning (DELL). The development of the guidelines was a joint effort by the DELL, PSB, CSLF and Peers Alliance. PSB staff received professional development in December which incorporated the guidelines.

7. PSB DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Student Services

Student Services have been concentrating a lot of time into mental health and well-being. As we move from pandemic to endemic, there is concern about students and staff and their mental well-being. Craig Clark has been hired as the Mental Health Team Lead.

This time of year also sees us busy in staffing, support staff placements, hiring and preschool to kindergarten transitions.

Student Transfer requests are also heavy at this time of year.

Student Services was actively working to support students during the recent shut down. Zoom meetings were held, consultations were completed and respite care was again offered.

Mental Health

A building relationships plan has been developed to focus on supporting mental health and social/emotional well-being. This plan will begin to roll out in June.

Looking at our model of inclusion has also been a focus this past year. We have a team formed who have been looking at our model and discussion has focused around what we are doing well and areas for improvement.

Behavior continues to be a theme we hear from schools requesting support. We do have a behavior consultant (Chelsey Broderick) who has been supporting schools with evidence based intervention to support positive behavior change.

All school counselors were able to take Dialectical Behavior Therapy courses and are using this training with students.

Human Resources

The Human Resource update includes activity between December 2021 and March 2022. Our number one focus is on maintaining staffing levels at schools to ensure no further interruption to student learning. Coupled with this focus is staff wellbeing. Staff at all levels have demonstrated flexibility, resilience and perseverance during the past few months while COVID numbers are high in our Island Community.

This report outlines key initiatives that follow HR Specific Competencies and General Competencies.

Strategic Development

Organizational Change & Development

- Development of a PBS Mentorship Program for first year administrators.
- Development of a two year School Support Strategic Action Plan based on the Listening and Learning exercise done in the fall with school administrators.

Innovation

- Completed a Lean Six Sigma activity for the Staffing Flow process, identified efficiencies, and process improvements
- Working on Absence Management Support plan
- Submissions made to ITSS for Recruitment/Hiring software and Incident Reporting Software

HR Technology & Analytics

- Labour Administration Module Review, PeopleSoft
- Canada Gateway Module Review
- Onboarding Module preparation work. Templates developed and PSB information Submitted
- Cleaning up probationary employees on PeopleSoft
- Clean up and validation of substitute information in AESOP

Organizational Relationships and Wellness

Labour Relations

- CUPE 3260 negotiations meetings have concluded
- TF Negotiations are moving to Arbitration
- 12 grievance meetings
- 4 Arbitrations are scheduled

Health & Wellness

- Social Media Campaign (presenting to Board March 23)
- Staff recognition (All that and a Bag of Chips)

Inclusion Diversity & Human Connections

- Retirement Committee Starting to plan Retirement Celebration (in person)
- Participated in Newcomers Association Virtual Career Fair

Integrated Talent Management

Learning Development & Succession Planning

- HR Team, one ASL and two Principals have completed Investigative Training
- Director of HR and the three ASLs have completed a certificate program in Workplace Restoration
- Insights Discovery Practitioner Accreditation Complete HR Manager
- Sabbatical Committee met and confirmed the PSB successful applicant for 22/23 Sabbatical leave
- 1st Year Principal orientation session completed
- 13 staff will complete the Administrator Leadership Program this spring.

Workforce Planning & Mobility

- French Recruitment (presentation to the Board)
- New staffing pilot has been successful. Applicants are contacted within 24- hours (one work day) from when their application is received. Interviews are scheduled within a one week period. A weekly schedule has been created and interviews take place on a daily basis. This ensures or sub/casual lists are refreshed on a regular basis. We are averaging 60 interviews per month.
- Holland College/Skills PEI confirmation of PSB employees accepted into the new EA Certificate Program for January 2022 start
- Participation in Student Job Fairs as part of the French Recruitment Work. (MSVU, Ottawa, UNB)
- UPEI Recruiting Presentation completed virtually
- Virtual session Future Employment Opportunities with the Public Sector (recruitment of Civil COVID staff under lay-off)
- Job Specifications Committees formalized for CUPE Specs

COVID related

- Contacted all casuals and substitutes for every employee group with the PSB to confirm availability when return to in person learning occurred
- Hired 40 Teacher subs to place in various schools for month long periods
- Hired Itinerant Administrative Assistants
- Hiring Itinerant cleaners
- PEI Emergency Program Eligibility confirmations were completed to support casual staff

Staffing for 2022/2023

- Meetings with school administrative teams have commenced
- Administrator postings started on March 23, 2022
- Staffing allocations, target date is mid-April

Corporate Services

Finance & Payroll

Finance and Payroll staff have continued to work very hard during the pandemic and most recently with our rise in cases after Christmas. We wish to thank our staff and extend our appreciation for their continued dedication and hard work during these difficult times.

We are happy to announce that a new position has been formed that will help Finance and Payroll Services. The position will be combined with the former Summerside Reception position and will also include areas of Finance, Payroll and general Corporate Services. This will provide some opportunities for capacity and cross training as well as allow the Financial Services Department to tackle some mandates/projects in order to

provide further improvements. The successful candidate for this position is Vanessa Heffel and she begins with the Public Schools Branch on March 28th.

With year-end quickly approaching, the Finance department is working hard to ensure a proper cut-off is achieved with March 31st Accounts Payable, Receivable and Purchasing. For the next few months, the department and staff will be busy with its audit and government consolidation process. As well, during this, staff will also begin processing 2022-23 work.

Purchasing is currently working on the 2022-23 School Supply and Janitorial tenders as well as working with Property Services on a variety of other initiatives.

Finally, the Finance Department is working towards implementing an upgrade to our School Cash Accounting software to School Cash Online. This will allow schools to accept online payments in the same system as their accounting. Not only will this reduce input and transfers for schools (from other online sources like Paypal, Bambora, Hot lunches) but it will also help to reduce cash in schools (a major improvement in internal control). This has been and continues to be a major project for this department and should provide positive improvements for staff, schools and parents once implemented.

The staff in the Payroll department have been working very hard during the staffing shortage caused by COVID 19/Omicron. With increased staff absences, on a daily basis there are an increased amount of substitutes being utilized. This causes payroll staff to work closely with Human Resources in order to ensure that staff are paid and coded properly in our system.

With year-end approaching, the Payroll department is also working to ensure proper payroll cutoff for March 31st is achieved.

With the final few months remaining of the school year, staff will be continuing to process payroll for our system while also planning for the upcoming ROE's that will need to be completed for our 10 month staff as well as summer pays for our instructional staff.

We are also happy to note that Carla Arsenault is the successful candidate for our Employee Compensation Supervisor position. Carla will be coming to us from Health PEI has a lot of experience in Payroll and the accompanying processes/work flows with Human Resources. Her start date was March 16th and we are very happy to have her on board.

School Safety Services

The School Safety Consultants has been working hard to provide support to the schools regarding various issues that have been arising. The safety program has been reviewed and renewed and this will be rolled out to schools with education around it.

School Safety Consultants have been receiving reports and results from the hazardous materials assessments that were completed. Consultants and working with schools and property services to ensure any concerns are addressed and staff are educated on

materials in their building and how to manage this accordingly to ensure a safe environment.

Property Services

Property Services has been busy dealing with many maintenance issues that are arising throughout the season. The fluctuations in the temperature have led to many additional maintenance issues. Also, we are still working to plan and prepare for the janitorial supplies and cleaning product orders that will be placed in order to have these items delivered to the schools in time for summer cleaning. Property Services is also working on their summer project list to ensure that everything is lined up for the projects that will be completed while students are on summer break.

We are happy to announce that Jason Guindon has joined the Property Services team as the Property Support Services Supervisor. He will be providing guidance and leadership to the custodians and cleaners throughout the system. Jason will also be providing support to Principals with the supervision of this group.

Construction Projects continue to progress at West Royalty Elementary, Eliot River Elementary and Montague Consolidated. Property Services staff continue to be an integral part of the committees that are overseeing these projects.

The design of the new Sherwood Elementary school is almost complete and will be moving to the next step of the process in the near future which PSB Property Services has also been heavily involved in.

The planning committee for the new Stratford High school continues their work and will soon begin work with the architect company as they move into the design phase of the work.

EAL/FAL

The work of the EAL/FAL team constantly evolves as new students arrive. The use of evidence-based research and practice has ensured that the service delivered to new language learners is relevant and progress oriented. Collaboration and cooperation with the Provincial Office of Immigration, Island Investment Development Inc., Immigrant, Refugee and Settlement Association of PEI, and local organizations involved in service to our newcomer community, continue to be a priority. The success of EAL/FAL learners in our school system and settlement of their families into our island community is the ultimate goal.

New Arrivals

It has been a busy year with new EAL and FAL arrivals. To date, we have registered 476 new EAL/FAL students into 40 schools spanning from Tignish to Souris and everywhere in between. New students represent 46 different countries with the top source countries being Hong Kong, Vietnam, Philippines, China, Mexico and India. While only 14 students of Refugee status arrived this year, we do expect more in the coming months. Additionally, we expect to see Ukrainian students arrive over the course of the coming

months and are working interdepartmentally to ensure that supports and services are in place.

This brings our current EAL/FAL population within the PSB to 2416 with 851 students receiving itinerant teacher support, 27 students completing high school EAL courses on-line and another 45 students completing high school EAL courses with school-based support.

Needs of New Arrivals

When a family travels halfway around the world to come to PEI, they leave many things behind. However, their physical, social/emotional, behavioral or academic needs come with them. As a result, we are seeing more and more EAL students with needs requiring some form of additional support, educational assistant, youth service worker, counselor etc. We continue to create awareness of these additional needs at the PSB, Department and Government level, and work to find creative solutions to support them.

On-line EAL Courses

We are very proud of our delivery of high school EAL courses online. At this point, we are providing on-line courses to 28 students in 6 schools. This online model of EAL course delivery provides equitable access to students needing EAL courses in rural PEI and has provided a mechanism to reach more students without additional positions.

Assessment Process

Fine tuning of our new language proficiency assessment has resulted in a very solid process with which to determine a new language learner's strengths and challenges in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Our new process has resulted in better information available for the school registration process and for the classroom/subject teacher. Packages are now being created and sent in advance for registration, for teachers and for bus drivers. No longer should a teacher or bus driver question the spelling of a name or the home language of a new student. Additionally, the visual representation of the language proficiency assessment along all 4 strands has proved to be very beneficial for the understanding of parents/guardians.

Re-assessment

As April approaches, we are gearing up for re-assessments. Re-assessments allow us to solidify our recommendations for itinerant support at the K-9 level or EAL courses at the high school level. This year, we have 925 re-assessments to complete with Kindergarten students as part of the process. We will have all assessments and recommendations completed by the end of May and will host feedback sessions with parents from June 22-24, hopefully in person.

Teacher Support

While COVID has made it challenging, we continue to support teachers of new language learners both in person and online. Much attention has been dedicated to supporting

teachers with differentiated instruction and assessment. Every effort has been made to access material resources that support curriculum delivery while also supporting the language levels of new students.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Work is underway to develop and align a PSB action plan that corresponds with the Province of Prince Edward Island's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025. This work will involve collaboration with the Diversity Consultant of the Public Service Commission, the Diversity Consultant of the Department of Education of Lifelong Learning, various community stakeholders and a committee at the PSB level. A draft of this work is expected by the end of June.

Transportation

Drivers

For COVID and many other reasons, similar to other PSB employee categories, transportation is facing challenges with absenteeism and our ability to backfill when regular drivers are out for any reason. We are pleased to report that with 261 full time drivers, the PSB has worked to ensure a complement of 70 substitute drivers. This puts us in a far better position than 18 months ago when our substitute pool totaled less than 20 drivers. With that said, many of these existing substitutes are filling long term vacancies, and many are not always available when called.

This has required us to move substitute drivers from one area of the province to another, and we have even had our transportation supervisors get behind the wheel to cover substitute shifts. In worst case scenarios, we have had late buses, but to this point, these have been few and far between. Kudos to regular drivers in these scenarios for stepping up and conducting second and third runs to cover.

Electric Buses

One year ago (March 2021) the PSB (and FLSB) activated our first batch of 12 Lion Electric school buses. In August 2021, procurement was announced for an additional 35 Lion buses. Of those 35, 27 have arrived and are at the Brackley depot. 12 of these have been activated into our fleet, making our current total (with the FLSB) 24 electric school buses in service.

Charging infrastructure continues to be a challenge. Covid and other factors have led to supply chain disruptions leading to our 24 active buses currently sharing the original 12 charging stations at Brackley. Through the input and support of drivers, we have a short term plan in place that is working, whereby a schedule exists for buses to share these charging stations. We expect infrastructure to be fully in place in April to support each bus with its own dock.

Due to our inability to reasonably charge buses beyond 24, 15 electric buses are currently at Brackley awaiting activation, with another 8 scheduled to be delivered when charging infrastructure permits. This will complete the 2022 procurement. A further procurement

announcement for 2023 has also been announced which will add an additional 35 buses to be shared between the PSB and CSLF fleets.

Efforts are also underway to explore individual charging stations at driver's homes. Thus far this option appears very promising as initial installation costs are proving to be significantly lower on a per bus basis, and with overall peak demand being dictated by only one bus as opposed to tens of buses, ongoing overall electrical charges are expected to be smaller with the individual charging station model.

Routing

Efforts are underway to further review bus routes, particularly in the Charlottetown and Summerside areas, to address issues of time on buses, overcrowding, and the length of the school day. Transportation routes are extremely complex with many interdependent factors. Availability and limitations of resources will continue to dictate our progress in this regard.

8. FRENCH RECRUITMENT UPDATE

Diane Arsenault joined the meeting and provided a presentation and overview of her work to date with French Recruitment.

9. SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Angie MacCaull joined the meeting and provided a presentation and overview of the Social Media campaign.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

No new business to report at this time.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.