

Special Meeting of the Board

Minutes

Thursday, March 4, 2021

Start Time:

Craig M. Stahlke Board Room

Administration Office

181 Henlow Bay, Winnipeg, MB R3Y 1M7

1. ATTENDANCE

Trustees:

K. McMillan, S. Billingham, J. Fisher, J. Glenat, D. Johnson, T. Johnson, G. Melnyk, C. Nachtigall, D. Zuk

Administration:

T. Fransen, Superintendent

L. Boles, Assistant Superintendent - Divisional Support Services

E. Egan, Assistant Superintendent - Human Resources

J. Tomy, Assistant Superintendent - Curriculum and Learning Services

N. Wood, Secretary-Treasurer

Regrets: Nil

2. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

Resolution

Moved By T. Johnson

Seconded By C. Nachtigall

THAT the agenda be approved as circulated.

Carried

4. DELEGATIONS

4.1 EAPT Executive - R. Hartung and R. Ballam (In-Person)

R. Hartung, Acting President, and R. Ballam, Secretary-Treasurer of the EAPT, (Education Assistants in Pembina Trails) Executive made a presentation to the board.

They acknowledged that balancing the budget is no easy feat, but asked that the board reconsider eliminating EA positions in our high schools.

R. Ballam highlighted the duties of an EA and the importance of their role, especially during the pandemic. She shared that with the Manitoba Health protocols in place, EAs are an integral part of keeping the continuation of learning possible.

R. Ballam advised that they supervised students and implemented lessons while classes were split to accommodate social distancing. They also played a key role in assisting with remote learning. She shared that EAs also provide necessary one on one support to students that teachers may not be able to accommodate.

R. Hartung reiterated to the board that enrolment growth and increased class sizes mean EA support will be needed. She also shared her concern with the large number of students who will be returning to in-class learning and may have gaps in their education. These students will require additional assistance.

R. Hartung and R. Ballam ended their presentation by thanking the board for the opportunity to speak stating that now is not the time to cut EAs.

4.2 A. Vasquez Jimenez (Virtual)

A. Vasquez Jimenez of the Latinx, Afro-Latin-America, Abya Yala Education Network made a virtual presentation to the board.

She asked that the board remove School Resource Officers (SRO) from our schools and divest all support and funding related to the SRO program.

A. Vasquez Jimenez shared that she believes that removal of the SRO program aligns with Policy DA as well as with our Pembina Trails Standard of Behaviour.

She does not believe that creating and maintaining a healthy and equitable school is possible with police presence.

A. Vasquez Jimenez shared the findings of the Caring and Safe Schools Report and how the amount of suspensions and expulsions dropped with the removal of the SRO Program. This report was based out of the Toronto District School Board.

She shared the importance of equity and human rights and urged the board to be fiscally responsible and reallocate the SRO funding into the classroom as well as inspire other school divisions across Canada to do the same.

J. Glenat asked A. Vasquez Jimenez if the data she shared is solely Toronto based. A. Vasquez Jimenez advised yes, but reiterated that this is a systemic racism issue and not a local issue. This issue occurs across all provinces nationwide, in her opinion.

4.3 C. Scott (Virtual)

C. Scott of Police Free Schools Winnipeg made a virtual presentation to the board.

He spoke of the negative impacts police presence in schools has especially to the newcomer students or other students who have come from highly policed, war torn areas.

He shared his concern on uneven consequences based on race.

C. Scott shared his confusion on how the Winnipeg Police Service offers the SRO Program as a community service, but it is partially paid for by school divisions.

In light of balancing the current budget he does not agree that important sustainable services such as Educational Assistants should be cut for School Resource Officers who are not equipped with providing essential instructional services to our students.

He believes that this money could be better spent and reallocated.

C. Scott advised the board that Police-Free Schools Winnipeg is a coalition of educators, students and community members who have been actively collecting stories of School Resource Officers and the negative impact their presence has in schools across Winnipeg. He recommended that the board visit their website at www.policefreeschoolswpg.ca for additional information.

J. Fisher asked if his research was based on the negative feedback on SROs is coming more out of high schools than from K-8?

C. Scott responded that yes, more so from the high schools but hearing distressing stories from the younger grades is not uncommon. He further stated that a large number of stories in the younger grades come from parents/guardians and Educational Assistants. He shared a large part of those younger grade concerns come from students being fascinated with the weapons that the police officers carry.

C. Scott thanked the board for taking his presentation into consideration.

4.4 PTTA Executive - L. Legal and S. Giesbrecht (In-Person)

L. Legal. PTTA president presented to the board.

She asked the board to reconsider not increasing class sizes and not reduce EAL teachers and Teacher-Librarians.

L. Legal shared a story of an EAL Pembina Trails student from a war-torn region and the importance that the EAL teacher and Teacher-Librarian played in

providing this child along with many others, the tools needed in order to succeed in our schools.

She further stated that with the proposed increased class sizes and without the assistance of important roles like teachers, EAL specialists and Teacher-Librarians, students like the EAL student she spoke of could more easily fall through the cracks.

She acknowledged the difficult decision that the board has faced in making these decisions given the current provincial funding situation.

L. Legal spoke to the fact that the board could have raised the tax levy to the permissible 2% amount in past years and did not. She believes those decisions have had a cumulative impact on the current budget, and this lost funding of \$1.69 million could have been used to hire 13 additional teachers.

She shared a number of suggestions to the board including lobbying the government for additional funding and that the board could ask that the province allow the mill rate in Pembina Trails remain at the 2020 level, thereby providing additional revenue.

L. Legal recommended that the board proceed with hiring the additional 19 teachers needed to cover the anticipated enrolment growth and how such a decision would be an indispensable investment.

T. Johnson referred to the \$56 million in surplus that L. Legal had referenced in her remarks and asked for clarification from the Secretary-Treasurer.

The Secretary-Treasurer shared that \$44 million of the \$56 million that L. Legal referred to are tangible Capital assets (buildings and schools) which leave approximately \$12 million. She said that \$7 million of that has been spent on COVID related costs.

G. Melnyk asked the Secretary-Treasurer what we currently have in available surplus as defined by the province.

The Secretary-Treasurer shared the details of the accumulated surplus including required allocation of funds to the teacher Joint Professional Development Fund, remaining school budgets, the International Student Program, and the Pembina Trails Educational Support Fund which leaves approx. \$2.8 million to the Board's discretion.

4.5 N. Card - MSLA Past President and Pembina Trails Parent (Virtual)

N. Card, qualified Teacher-Librarian (in another school division), Pembina Trails parent and past president of the MB School Library Association presented virtually to the board.

She shared her concerns with increase in high school class sizes and the proposed reduction of Teacher-Librarians.

N. Card spoke to the fact that our Pembina Trails Teacher-Librarians were the recipients of the Leading and Learning Implementation Award in 2020. She shared that she was very disappointed to hear that the board is considering removing this national award winning team, which in her opinion completely undermines their achievements.

She shared the importance of the role of Teacher-Librarians and how they are an integral part of education.

N. Card urged the board to continue to have Teacher-Librarians present in all of our schools.

6. QUESTIONS FROM TRUSTEES

T. Johnson spoke to the PTTA presentation and to their recommendation of increasing the levy. He advised that the board had considered this and asked the Superintendent to share the province's response.

The Superintendent shared the details of his correspondence with the province. He asked if they would officially consider allowing Pembina Trails freeze the mill rate, due to the shortfall in funding and being the only division with an arbitration award. He stated that the province denied this request.

The Superintendent explained that he does not blame the reductions in the budget on the arbitration award, but that it is the cause of a funding shortfall. The division's media release intentionally referenced the unanimous decision of the arbitration board on the interest arbitration award. This included the school division's nominee on the board.

He stated that the arbitration award is fair, just and well-deserved and felt it important that that official record reflect that.

T. Johnson asked what could happen if we went against the province's request.

The Secretary-Treasurer shared the details of the 2021-22 funding announcement from the province where it states "we are requesting that school boards not raise the levy". The Secretary-Treasurer believes that "request", in a polite way means "require" in this instance and would apply to all 37 school divisions. This belief has been reinforced through liaison meetings between MASBO and representatives from the province.

In follow-up, the Superintendent advised that the Chair of the Board has formally requested a meeting with the Minister of Education to make the case that because of the interest arbitration, Pembina Trails (and LRSD) is in a unique situation.

D. Johnson asked the Secretary-Treasurer to elaborate on her anticipation of what would happen if we defy the province's request.

The Secretary-Treasurer spoke to the Property Tax Offset grant, and said she suspects that if the Pembina Trails Board decided to defy the province's request and increase the property tax levy, we would likely receive a reduction in that offset grant or other grants going forward.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

PTTA President, L. Legal thanked the board for the opportunity to speak to the budget.

8. Correspondence for Information - Draft Budget 2021-22 Feedback

D. Zuk shared that the board plans to carefully review all of the budget feedback correspondence that was received.

Resolution #

Moved By G. Melnyk

Seconded By J. Glenat

THAT the board receive the Draft 2021-22 Budget Feedback as information.

Carried

10. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Chair of the Board

Secretary-Treasurer