

ANGLOPHONE SOUTH SCHOOL DISTRICT (ASD-S)
DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting – September 9, 2020

The District Education Council (DEC) for Anglophone South School District (ASD-S) met virtually on Wednesday, September 9, 2020. The following Council members and staff were in attendance:

Council Members:

Rob Fowler, Chair; Roger Nesbitt, Vice Chair; Wayne Spires, Heather Gillis, Justin Tinker, Lory-Ann MacAskill, Larry Boudreau, Dan O'Connor, Bernie Regenbogen

Regrets: Kristen Murphy, Richard Malone

ASD-S Staff:

Zoë Watson, Superintendent; Paul Smith, Director of Schools, Saint John Education Centre; Allan Davis, Director of Schools, Hampton Education Centre, Derek O'Brien, Director of Schools, St. Stephen Education Centre, John MacDonald, Director of Finance & Administration; Gary Hall, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Jessica Hanlon, Director of Communication, and Clare Murphy, Recording Secretary.

1. Call to Order/Welcome/Regrets

Mr. Fowler called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Approvals

2.1 Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Fowler referred to the Agenda for the meeting and asked that if there were no questions or concerns that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Nesbitt moved that the Agenda be approved. Seconded by Ms. Gillis. Motion carried.

2.2 Approval of Minutes

Mr. Fowler referred to the Minutes of the August 19, 2020 meeting and asked if there were no questions or concerns that a motion be put forward to approve. There being no questions or concerns, Mr. Nesbitt moved that the Minutes be approved as presented. Seconded by Ms. Gillis. Motion carried.

3. Member's Notebook

Mr. O'Connor advised Council that the It Takes a Village group invested some grant funds to create a video that could be posted on school websites to help students/parents who are anxious about returning to school in these uncertain times. He forwarded the link to all DEC members and advised that it could be shared by the District in order to get it out to all parents/families.

Ms. Gillis wanted to congratulate the teaching teams who spent a lot of time considering student mental wellness by ensuring that all students had a friend in their class. Very positive start to the school year.

4. Presentations

4.1 Early Childhood Update

Ms. Lissa McNaughton-Dickie, Director of Early Childhood, was in attendance to update Council on the progress in her department over the past year. Her presentation is attached to and forms part of these Minutes.

Ms. McNaughton-Dickie provided a recap of the COVID-19 shutdown and the effects on her department including the opening of 11 emergency care centres to care for children of frontline workers. She spoke of the Early Learning and Childcare Designation program, professional learning opportunities, the redesign of Talk With Me which aimed to create consistency across the province in core program names, content and brand awareness, and a new logo design. She also outlined the Bridging Project plans for this year with Blacks Harbour School.

Following the presentation, questions arose from Council including: ways in which the Bridging Project could be promoted/CELEBRATED, and what format Kindergarten registration/EYE-DA assessments would take for this school year, all of which were addressed by Ms. McNaughton-Dickie.

Mr. Fowler thanked Ms. McNaughton-Dickie for her informative presentation.

5. Business Arising from Minutes

5.1 PSSC Orientation Update

Ms. Gillis provided a brief update on the plans for this fall, noting that it was decided to get through the first week of school before moving forward in greater detail.

She advised that the orientations will be virtual, could include a letter from DEC representatives, possibly a video of a mock meeting, and greetings from the Superintendent and DEC. Mrs. Watson suggested that if anyone has any other thoughts or suggestions on the process for filling PSSC positions to please connect with her. She noted that the District has documents that will provide a lot of general information to potential PSSC members. It was suggested that a Synervoice message be sent to all parents/families to make them aware of PSSCs and to explain Principals would be sending a message if new members are needed.

6. New Business

6.1 Expenditure Plan Update

Mr. MacDonald presented the Expenditure Plan and advised that the document is considered “draft” as there will be adjustments made in the coming months due to school closure savings from mid-March until June, and COVID-19 expenses.

Mr. MacDonald reviewed the expenditure line items highlighting the areas where deficits are expected including, but not limited to; the shortfall in funding for 71 EAs, custodian/maintenance and bus driver replacement costs, as well as travel costs. At this time, the District is forecasting a break-even budget for the fiscal year April 2020 – March 2021.

Questions followed with regard to a concern over a shortage in the IT budget line, the inadequate funding system for EAs, and the possibility of revenue from facilities rentals in the coming months. Mrs. Watson noted that the salaries for the IT staff were not in the budget as yet, and also, that the District supports IT with additional monies from self-sustaining funds. She advised that permission had been granted to hire 4 additional technicians for our District given the increased reliance on technology during the pandemic.

Mr. Nesbitt then moved that Council accept the “draft” Expenditure Plan as presented. Seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion carried. Mr. Boudreau voted against the motion.

7. Information Items

7.1 Superintendent’s Report and Update

Mrs. Watson reviewed her report which had been posted with Council’s meeting materials for their review.

She noted that in late August we learned of the unexpected death of LeRoy Ryder a long-time bus driver in the Saint John Education Centre. His obituary stated that “he had said many times that being a bus driver was the best job anywhere!” LeRoy was making preparations for the upcoming school year, his last before retirement. She asked for a moment of silence in his memory.

She highlighted several key areas from her report including: the focus on return to school, operational plans for all schools, virtual PD with Kevin Cameron and Dr. Daniel Chorney, staggered entry for students, personal protective equipment and supplies (e.g. masks, floor markings, face shields, sanitizer and disinfectant), signage at schools for COVID-19, transportation orientation sessions, changes and challenges with altering of bus routes and number of children per bus, (1 per seat or 24 at K-5 and 2 per seat or 48 at grades 6-12), vulnerable students who cannot attend school and require an “at home support plan”, communication to parents and media, to name a few.

Mrs. Watson thanked school principals for their work in early August on as we planned for the reopening of schools.

7.2 Chair’s Report and Update

Mr. Fowler noted that as in past election cycles, DEC Chairs reached out to the political leaders for a meeting to discuss issues in education. This was not to endorse any party, but to gather information and to provide them with our areas of concern. The only feedback received was from David Coon of the Green Party, and that information was forwarded to Council members.

Mr. Fowler noted that hopefully we could soon look at opening up Council meetings to the public; possibly 5 people, on a registration basis, depending upon space for physical distancing. Next month Council will still have the option to meet remotely.

7.3 Correspondence

None.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Fowler thanked all who attended this evening’s Council meeting and reminded Council the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 14, 2020 beginning at 7:00 p.m. Council may choose to attend in person or virtually.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Fowler, Chair

Clare Murphy, Recording Secretary