

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

7:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Trustees Present:	Sandra Schwartz, Justine Bell, Christine Boothby, Rob Campbell, Chris Ellis, Lyra Evans, Mark Fisher, Wendy Hough, Jennifer Jennekens, Keith Penny, Lynn Scott, Charles Chen (Student Trustee), Joy Liu (Student Trustee)
Staff Present:	Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director), Mike Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Janice McCoy (Superintendent of Human Resources), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Eric Hardie (Superintendent of Instruction), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Nadia Towaij (Superintendent of Program and Learning K-12), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Kevin Gardner (Manager, Finance), Sandy Owens (Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Pamela LeMaistre (Manager, Human Resources), Diane Pernari-Hergert (Manager, Communications & Information Services), Julie Cyr (Manager, Early Learning), Stacey Kay (Manager, Learning Support Services), Charles D'Aoust (Coordinator of Budget Services), Teri Adamthwaite (Coordinator of Financial Reporting), Nicole Guthrie (Manager, Board Services), Michael Guilbault (AV Technician), Rebecca Grandis (Senior Board Coordinator).
Non-Voting Representatives Present:	Malaka Hendela (OCASC-Alt), Jennifer Capitani (OCEOC), Wulf Heidecker (ETFO-Alt), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF-Teachers), Melodie Gondek (OSSTF-ESP), Jean Trant (OSSTF-SSP), Cathy Miedema (SEAC), Bronwyn Funicello (ACE), Nina Stanton (IEAC),

1. Call to Order - Chair of Committee of the Whole, Budget

Chair Schwartz called the Committee of the Whole Budget meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded

Algonquin Territories and thanked the Algonquin Nations for hosting the meeting on their land.

Chair Schwartz noted the meeting is a continuation of the 9 June 2021 Committee of the Whole Budget meeting and the purpose of the meeting is to hear from a delegation and continue the discussion on the recommendation in Report 21-047, 2021-2022 Staff-recommended Budget.

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Delegations

3.1 Katie Gibbs, re Funding Concerns-Safety of Students

Katie Gibbs, a parent of students within the District, came before trustees to note her concern after completing the year-end survey and observing that there were no options available to request additional safety measures for the 2021-2022 school year. Ms. Gibbs acknowledged that everyone would like to see students return to a regular school year, but she indicated her concern that students under the age of 12 will not be fully vaccinated in September 2021. She advised that an unvaccinated cohort combined with the more contagious variants is a significant threat and may result in high infection rates. Ms. Gibbs expressed a desire to see the Board advocate for additional funding from the Province to maintain the measures that were implemented in the 2020-2021 school year, at least for younger grades where enhanced measures will be required, such as improved ventilation, CO2 monitors, smaller class sizes, outdoor learning and rapid testing. She noted that students will need full support to return to school after a very challenging year.

In response to questions from trustees, Ms. Gibbs indicated that herd immunity does not allow for unvaccinated students to mix with each other in a room with inadequate ventilation and she is concerned the virus could spread rapidly if not monitored. Ms. Gibbs advised that other parents also had concerns with the survey that did not allow for the response of more safety measures as an option.

Executive Officer Giroux advised that the structure of the survey question was based on feedback from previous surveys, and she indicated there was an area provided for respondents to include comments. It was not the intent of the survey question to suggest that the District has contemplated doing anything less in terms of safety measures and she apologized for the confusion.

Associate Director Reynolds advised that the safety measures that were implemented in schools in 2020-2021 had the desired effect of keeping transmission rates low and he indicated the plan will be the same for the 2021-2022 school year. Staff will continue to rely on the guidance from Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and will respond accordingly.

CFO Carson advised that CO2 detectors in buildings in the District are only effective when air is exchanged one to two times per hour. Throughout the school year occupied buildings had air exchanged three to four times per hour, in addition to purging the building before and after occupation, in accordance with international standards and Ministry of Health and Education guidance. He noted that the District purchased 1500 portable high efficiency particulate absorbing (HEPA) filters for classrooms with inadequate ventilation. In addition, filters were upgraded and changed more frequently. CFO Carson advised that ventilation is only one component of mitigation along with other protocols and indicated staff would continue to monitor, noting his opinion that based on all the guidance received to date, schools can be made safe for return in the fall of 2021.

4. Matters for Action

4.1 Report 21-047, 2021-2022 Staff-Recommended Budget

Chair Schwartz noted the supplemental information included in the agenda package that provided release two and three of the budget questions and answers.

- a) Supplementary Information, Memo 21-077, 2021-2022 Staff-Recommended Budget Questions and Answers (Release 2)
- b) Supplementary Information, Memo 21-083, 2021-2022 Staff-Recommended Budget Questions and Answers (Release 3)
- c) Status of Budget Motion

Chair Schwartz outlined the recommendation and amendments that were tabled at the conclusion of the 9 June 2021 Committee of the Whole Budget Meeting.

During discussion on the recommendation and the amendments, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question of clarification from Trustee Scott regarding the source of the \$95,000, that is to be added to the RAISE expenditure budget, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carson advised that staff has reserved \$200,000 to respond to the decision that might be made on the school resource officer (SRO) program in the fall, and it was placed in a miscellaneous

budget line. The amount of \$95,000 came from those reserved funds;

- In response to a question of clarification from Trustee Campbell, regarding \$200,000 to be allocated to equity needs outlined in the budget and after drawing \$95,000 from those funds, there would still be \$105,000 remaining for schools with the greatest needs, CFO Carson indicated that the funds were reserved prior to trustees making amendments and noted the funds would remain committed for the original purpose of equity needs;
- Manager Gardner advised that the increase of \$500,000 in staff replacement costs for principals and vice-principals recognizes the increased requirement for replacement staff and the need to occasionally augment existing staff. The provision has been added to address the issue of historical overspending in that area and to properly plan for replacement costs. He confirmed that there was a small provision of \$200,000 in previous budgets and the \$500,000 was a top-up to increase the provision to approximately \$700,000.
- In response to a question from Trustee Lyra Evans regarding the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* with respect to future liabilities and whether all buildings would be accessible by 2025, CFO Carson advised that while the *Act* requires organizations to comply with *the AODA* he indicated he could not be certain this is possible within the District. He advised that the challenges lay with the absence of regulations and standards under *the Act* to allow for compliance. He noted that depending on what standards may apply there is an estimated cost of between \$100 million and \$300 million to bring the District buildings into compliance. CFO Carson noted the District is compliant with the standard in the building code for new construction. He noted that staff endeavours to bring older buildings up to code, where possible, when completing renovations. Trustee Lyra Evans noted her concern that the District may be open to lawsuits if its obligations cannot be compliant with the *Act* and urged staff to think of this in future budgets;
- Trustee Penny inquired whether staff has determined if the District is eligible for additional funding as outlined in Ministry Memorandum SB12. CFO Carson indicated that staff have reviewed the memo, and although the details are not clear, the eligibility will depend on the accounting decisions staff have made and will require a discussion with the Ministry. He advised staff are confident there will be funds that can be recovered

through this funding and are awaiting guidance from the Ministry on how to proceed. He noted that this potential funding is not included in the staff-recommended budget;

- In response to a question from Trustee Bell regarding the status of budget items that are aligned with the Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap (the Roadmap), CFO Carson indicated that the information that has been provided in the question and answer release will be the extent of staff's response. Regarding the expenditures on Community partnerships, CFO Carson indicated that agreements and reimbursements vary between partners that exchange services and noted that staff may include this information in future budgets;
- In response to a question regarding funding to Student Achievement through Equity (SATE) programs, Director Williams-Taylor advised that staff have been contemplating approaches to effectively closing gaps in the intersections of needs and performance. She noted that Superintendent Duah and his team developed a data baseline of intersecting needs. The funds that will be applied to this work are a redirection of existing funds to enhance outcomes in schools that are high on the Resource Allocation Index based on Socioeconomics (RAISE) index through a number of differentiated approaches;
- Director Williams-Taylor advised that Superintendent Duah and his team are looking at intersecting needs, focused on one school in the 2020-2021 school year to test strategies and theories. The plan for the next 11 schools is a collaborative inquiry to look at principles to enhance outcomes. If the strategies prove to be effective, the plan would be to expand to other schools. The approach has been carefully measured to ensure sustainability and expandability in future;
- CFO Carson advised that, regarding special education funding, the District proposed a gap between funding and expenditures of 4-5%. Amounts in excess of that would apply pressure to the entire system as spending beyond the envelope in one area results in a reduction in another. He noted it is within the Board's purview to overspend in any area, but decisions would be required to determine what the funds are taken from;

An amendment moved by Trustee Hough,

THAT the Board authorize an allocation of up to \$100,000 to support the hiring of a 1.0 FTE Indigenous Student Support Coordinator.

Trustee Hough advised she had spent time with the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) and had discussions regarding the priorities for the Indigenous portfolio and noted that the Board has an obligation to this community. The Indigenous Education team indicated they required a student support coordinator that could advance the work to provide mental health support and connect students of all ages, their families and schools. Trustee Hough advised the proposed position would be flexible to offer support such as transportation coordination and orientation for newcomers to the City of Ottawa. The initiative aligns with the goal in the Roadmap to expand the Indigenous Education Team to include an additional itinerant mental health worker. Trustee Hough confirmed that she is seeking a permanent full-time position to be added to the Indigenous Education Team complement.

During the discussion and in response to questions the following points were noted:

- In response to a question from Trustee Penny, regarding the deficit and debt position of the District and the Ministry's requirement for a deficit elimination plan, CFO Carson advised that the discussions would include a return to normal revenues, post pandemic. He noted that the \$2.7 million deficit may be eliminated as staff work through the reserve restitution process with the Ministry, but he indicated that, in his opinion, should an elimination plan be required to be implemented, it would be a multi-year plan;
- In response to a question from Trustee Penny about the position outlined in Trustee Hough's amendment and whether this is an overlap with other staff in the department, Director Williams-Taylor advised that this is a unique approach to address a trust and engagement with vulnerable students from a community that may have suffered trauma. She noted that Indigenous students have unique needs;
- Superintendent Baker advised that the support required for Indigenous students is cultural and unique and intended to regain the trust of these students. She noted that the existing compliment within the Indigenous Education portfolio is stretched very thinly and there is a great need for support of these students and their families and staff to advance achievement;
- Trustee Penny noted his concern about the source of the funding and urged staff to re-allocate existing funds for this initiative to eliminate the need to find future reductions in other

areas like special education or the Extended Day Program and cautioned his fellow trustees to consider his concerns;

- Trustee Hough advised that she did not contemplate a reduced savings in other areas to offset this initiative as CFO Carson had informed her that this initiative was achievable, without looking elsewhere for reductions. Trustee Scott noted that she was in support of the position but registered concern that as the initiatives are added there is a need to look to other lower priorities to make reductions to find offsets so as not to negatively impact the financial position of the District;
- Ms. Hendela indicated she was pleased to see amendments that have an impact and align with the goals of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. She reminded trustees that the District operates daycares as a side business and there has not been a review of the fees of international students. She suggested there were areas in the budget that could be reviewed to locate additional funding;
- CFO Carson advised that as he considered the amendments that have been added, he contemplated ways to find offsets for these expenditures. He noted that the current increase of \$500,000 would not require offsets but that staff would look for opportunities for savings in the coming year and ensure discretionary spending is carefully reviewed. Trustee Lyra Evans noted her concern that without offsetting savings for the increased expenditures the Ministry may look to the District to reduce programs to address the deficit;
- In response to a question from Trustee Campbell, as to why staff did not propose this position within the budget if it is of such great need, CFO Carson responded that he was not prepared to recommend a budget with a deficit of \$14.7 million knowing that trustees would have initiatives to add, and amendments are statements of support and direction toward strategic goals; and
- Trustee Boothby noted her concern about adding initiatives that increase the deficit, and advised that it is important to provide support for the Roadmap in order to fully evaluate its effectiveness in future. That may mean committing funding for initiatives outlined in the Roadmap and \$100,000 is a prudent investment to ensure success. Trustee Boothby clarified that in response to a comment about International Student fees, the Ottawa-Carleton Education Network (OCENET) did evaluate

and increase International Student fees within the last two years.

Trustee Hough asked her fellow trustees to contemplate the impact this position would have on Indigenous students from kindergarten to grade 12 and what a difference this will make as they successfully navigate their education within the OCDSB, noting that this is a start to true reconciliation. Trustee Hough stressed the requirement to focus on the needs of these students and to the District's goals.

An amendment moved by Trustee Hough,

THAT the Board authorize an allocation of up to \$100,000 to support the hiring of a 1.0 FTE Indigenous Student Support Coordinator.

Carried

Trustee Campbell requested a recorded vote on the amendment.

A recorded vote was held, and the motion was carried on the following division:

FOR: Trustees Scott, Boothby, Hough, Campbell, Ellis, Jennekens, Penny, Evans, Bell, Fisher, Schwartz, Chen, (11 trustees 1 student trustee)

AGAINST: Nil (0)

ABSTENTIONS: Nil 0)

During the discussion of the main motion the following points were noted:

- In response to a question from Trustee Scott on the kind of investments made and the proportionality between funding and changes in practice to move ahead with the Roadmap, Director Williams-Taylor advised that the Roadmap is a strategic action plan requiring changes in practice and the redeployment of resources to achieve its goals. She noted it is not always a matter of directing additional funding to a program but more a study of how existing funds are utilized to enhance outcomes. Director Williams-Taylor cited new programs have been funded by the Ministry to change practices within school boards to enhance outcomes. She provided various examples of where the District is testing, learning and looking at successes to determine where resources can be prudently directed, noting that a full audit would be required to provide a fulsome response. Trustee Scott reminded trustees that it is not always

funding that must be considered within a budget but the way practices can be changed to manage funding more prudently;

- CFO Carson responded to a query from MS. Hendela on the variances in the enrolment projections, CFO Carson advised that Ms. Hendela was referring to Ministry projections in the working papers that are based on the District's projections in November 2020. He noted that staff conducted a closer review of the enrolment numbers in October of 2020 and the figures used in the staff-recommended budget are conservative;
- Ms Hendela noted that the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) had estimated an increase of 1500 students and inquired if the OCDSB monitors migration trends from the OCDSB to other school boards. CFO Carson advised that the coterminous boards monitor this activity on an ongoing basis and noted that the migration trend indicates that greater numbers of students are moving to the Conseil des écoles publique de le'Est Ontario;
- Regarding parent engagement funding allocation moving to different grants and how much funding is provided, CFO Carson indicated the move of parent engagement funds to the foundation grant may have resulted in a slight reduction in funding. He noted that he was not aware of an increase in the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant and advised that staff would update school councils with any new information;
- Executive Officer Giroux advised that she took part in a teleconference where an increase to the PRO Grant was mentioned but no specific information on funding was provided and there has been no subsequent announcement, but staff are monitoring for updated information;
- CFO Carson advised that the \$150,000 for parent engagement continues in the 2021-2022 budget. The unspent funds have not been reserved to be carried over to a future year but the line item will continue. He indicated that when reviewing the financial statements it may be possible by motion to make a contribution of the unspent funds to reserves.

Following a break at 8:43 pm the meeting was called to order at 8:52 p.m.

d) Notice of Motion to Amend Budget:

1. Amendment, Trustee Bell

An amendment moved by Trustee Bell,

THAT the Board authorize an allocation of up to \$89,000 to support the hiring of 1.0 FTE Policy Analyst with a specialization in anti-racism and intersectional policy analysis.

Trustee Bell noted that the Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap included a commitment for cyclical policy review be undertaken using an Indigenous, human rights and equity lens. As well, trustees had recently committed to applying an anti-racism and intersectionality lens to that work. She noted her appreciation when trustees acknowledged that capacity was required to undertake the work. Trustee Bell advised the District has one policy analyst to manage the review of over 150 policies to ensure that they do not contribute to systemic discrimination. She expressed the opinion that policy sets the stage for practice and the principles that guide trustees' work. She noted her concern that without additional human resources it will be a challenge to complete the work. She urged her fellow trustees to support the Roadmap and prioritize students' needs to ensure there are no obstacles in the policy to achieving equity.

During discussion and in response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Trustee Campbell requested that the mover indicate if the intent of this position would be to manage the day-to-day work as well as equity and intersectionality work;
- Trustee Scott agreed that an additional policy analyst would be beneficial to assist with the day-to-day work beyond the equity and intersectionality work;

Trustee Scott assumed the Chair.

- Trustee Schwartz noted that while she supports the position, she queried where the now \$600,000 increase to the deficit will come from. CFO Carson noted that these funds will come from reserves. He advised that staff will adjust expenditures and are monitoring September enrolment, where there may be an opportunity for growth. CFO Carson indicated his confidence in addressing the Ministry regarding the \$14.9 million deficit approval but would not want to see increases beyond this amount;

- The Ministry would not deny any line items within the budget but if the Ministry did not approve the deficit, staff would be required to come back before the Board to outline adjustments that would be required;
- Regarding the sustainability of adding human resources over a longer term, CFO Carson indicated that he was confident that there will be increased enrolment and subsequent growth. He noted that international students will return, and revenue will return from community use of schools and the Extended Day Program, post pandemic, to address half of the deficit. New Ministry initiatives may be announced that would provide relief. CFO Carson indicated that the challenges the OCDSB is facing with its deficit is not unique, other school boards will be facing similar issues;

Trustee Schwartz resumed the Chair.

CFO Carson advised that the amount of \$89,000 for the additional policy analyst resulted from discussion with the mover and Finance staff. CFO Carson indicated if the position were to be approved hiring would occur in the fall of 2021.

Trustee Lyra Evans noted the importance of taking an equity-based approach through the office of the Human Rights and Equity Advisor (HREA).

A sub-amendment moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT “with a specialization in anti-racism and intersectional policy analysis” be replaced with “with a specialization in anti-racism, intersectional policy analysis, and in applying a human rights-based approach.”

Carried, Friendly

Trustee Bell noted that it was her intention that this position be a policy analyst with a specialization in a human-rights based approach. She indicated that, in alignment with the Roadmap, a human-rights based approach would be applied to all policies and the resources would be in place to undertake that work. She advised she would not comment on the operationalization of the position.

An amendment moved by Trustee Bell,

THAT the Board authorize an allocation of up to \$89,000 to support the hiring of 1.0 FTE Policy Analyst with a specialization in anti-racism, intersectional policy analysis, and in applying a human rights-based approach.

Carried

The discussion returned to the main motion to approve the 2021-2022 budget.

Trustee Lyra Evans noted that trustees have taken a reasonably prudent approach to the budget and urged her colleagues to support the budget.

Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

- A. THAT the unconsolidated 2021-2022 operating budget of \$1.0109 billion as presented in Report 21-047, 2021-2022 Staff-Recommended Budget and detailed in the 2021-2022 Staff-Recommended Budget Binder be approved, subject to Ministry authorization to use the accumulated surplus in the amount required to balance the budget, amended as follows:**
- 1. THAT \$200,000 be allocated from reserves to a central contingency fund for initiatives supporting the District's transition from School Resource Officer (SRO) and other Ottawa Police Service (OPS) reliance, to be used as needed during the course of the 2021-22 school year, and where:**
 - i. The fund shall be utilized for such related purposes as added de-escalation and unconscious bias training development or purchase, release time, procedural development, communications and consultation, funded non-OPS civil society partnerships and service providers, added tracking / analysis / reporting, and/or for other purposes, all to be determined by staff;**
 - ii. Lapsed funds shall be returned to reserves at the end of the school year, unless otherwise varied by the Board; and**
 - iii. A report on the use or non-use of this transitional contingency fund, and also of any continuing related unfunded needs, is to be provided to the Board to inform its 2022-23 budget process.**
 - 2. THAT \$200,000 be allocated from reserves to a central contingency fund for initiatives rooted in the ending of the SRO program related to targeted EAs, mental health, or other culturally appropriate resources, and/or counselling services for those impacted by previous OPS engagements, and where:**

- i. Lapsed funds shall be returned to reserves at the end of the school year, unless otherwise varied by the Board; and
 - ii. A report on the use or non-use of this transitional contingency fund, and also of any continuing related unfunded needs, is to be provided to the Board to inform its 2022-23 budget process.
- 3. THAT the \$95,000 in savings achieved through the discontinuation of the additional School Resource Officer resources, be added to the RAISE expenditure budget.
- 4. THAT the Board authorize an allocation of up to \$100,000 to support the hiring of a 1.0 FTE Indigenous Student Support Coordinator.
- 5. THAT the Board authorize an allocation of up to \$89,000 to support the hiring of 1.0 FTE Policy Analyst with a specialization in anti-racism, intersectional policy analysis, and in applying a human rights-based approach.
- B. THAT the 2021-2022 capital budget of \$119.8 million as presented in the 2021- 2022 Staff-Recommended Budget Binder, be approved.

Carried

5. New Business - Information and Inquiries

There was no new business.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Chair Schwartz advised that a Special Board Meeting would immediately follow this meeting.

Sandra Schwartz, Chair