



## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

**Tuesday, June 1, 2021**

**7:00 pm**

**Zoom Meeting**

Trustees Present:	Sandra Schwartz, Donna Blackburn, 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), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Eric Hardie (Superintendent of Instruction), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Nadia Towaj (Superintendent of Program and Learning K-12), 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, Michael Guilbault (AV Technician), Rebecca Grandis (Senior Board Coordinator)
Non-Voting Representatives Present:	Malaka Hendela (OCASC-Alt), Jennifer Capitani (OCEOC), Jennifer Coleman (OCSSAN), Wulf Heidecker (ETFO-Alt), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF-Teachers), Kelly Granum (OSSTF-OT), Pat Dixon (OCEOTA), Troy Cluff (OSSTF-PSSU), 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 public session to order at 7:01 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 began by reflecting on the discovery of the remains of 215 Indigenous children discovered on the grounds of the former Kamloops residential school site. She noted that we share in the grief with the entire nation and noted that flags have been lowered to half-mast at all District sites in remembrance for the lives lost. Chair Schwartz offered her hope that this discovery and our collective response helps further our learning on the importance of truth and reconciliation and that as an organization dedicated to education we must continue to shine a light on the past and work diligently for the future. A moment of silence was held in remembrance of the victims.

Chair Schwartz advised that the purpose of the meeting is to present the 2021-2022 Staff-Recommended Budget and for stakeholders to ask questions of staff. She urged trustees to endeavour to have a balanced budget passed by the end of June 2021.

2. Approval of Agenda

**Moved by Trustee Blackburn,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

There was no declared conflict of interest.

4. Delegations

There were no delegations.

5. Discussion Items

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

Your Committee had before it Report 21-047, 2021-2022 Staff-Recommended Budget, presenting the staff-recommended budget for discussion.

Director Williams-Taylor noted that this is the first opportunity for engagement and discussion about the staff-recommended budget. She noted that the purpose of the budget is to share a vision of deploying resources to advance the commitment to the three key areas of focus in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, advancing a culture of care, innovation, and social responsibility. In addition, a part of the strategic plan includes the work that is encapsulated in the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap and the deployment of resources supports this work.

Director Williams Taylor noted that the 2021-2022 staff-recommended budget was developed in consideration of the continued COVID-19 reality in the District and was reflected in the deployment of resources.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carson advised that the goal of staff is threefold:

- To present and highlight the issues in Report 21-047;
- To present the format of the staff-recommended budget; and
- To direct trustees to Appendix E to Report 21-047, that summarizes the changes, and the initiatives staff are proposing.

CFO Carson noted that the first release of the question and answer (Q&A) document was not yet ready to be shared as additional reconciliation was required to address the questions on the commitments within the budget that support the equity of outcomes for students and the spending on improved ventilation in schools. CFO Carson committed to having this information by the next Committee of the Whole (COW) Budget meeting on 9 June 2021.

Manager Gardner shared a presentation that summarized report 21-047. The following highlights were shared:

- The character wheel is provided as a reminder that at budget time the Committee must remember the ten character attributes outlined on the wheel as difficult and complex decisions are made, and that all are here to serve the students within the OCDSB to the best of their ability;
- The budget process includes determining the amount of the accumulated surplus, determining the needs of the District and looking for ways to address the needs;
- It has been a challenge gathering information this year. Enrolment for 31 October for secondary school has not been finalized as a result of the quadmester system and the way full-time students are being recognized. The estimates that staff are working with to form the budget are broader than usual;
- Academic staffing was approved in March 2021, in accordance with Ministry direction, to return to normal in September of 2021;
- The Grants for Student Needs (GSN) were received in May 2021 and the delay in receipt reduces the time for staff to analyze the information thoroughly before the budget is developed;
- Staff will endeavour to provide all of the information necessary to approve the budget by 30 June 2021;

- For the 2021-2022 year, Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) provides 89% of District operating revenues;
- Changes in benchmarks were adjusted for the negotiated compensation increases;
- Two Priorities and Partnership Fund (PPF) grants were transferred to the GSN; After School Skills Development (ASSD) and Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM);
- PPF grants were provided to address COVID-19. The Ministry has recommended the use of half of the funding for the first part of the 2021-2022 year and to re-evaluate in the second semester;
- There was a change to the calculation of funding to support English Language and Literacy (ESL/ELD) to recognize that urban school boards have experienced a drop in new immigration that would result in a significant drop in funding;
- The school operation benchmarks have been increased to offset commodity price increases;
- The challenge of developing a budget is aligning the available resources to maximize the achievement of the three priorities of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. It has been a significant challenge this year to support changes that were driven by COVID-19;
- The impact of COVID-19 continues to be realized within the District by lower enrolment, expenses that have been incurred to ensure safety in school buildings, and stress and uncertainty that is felt by students, families and staff;
- The 2021-2022 staff-recommended budget is based on estimates. Should staff identify an error in the estimates, they will report back to trustees;
- Staff were able to enhance resources within the budget to make progress in improving and ensuring equity;
- There will be a requirement for the District to support the mental health of students, families, staff and those within the Ottawa community;
- There are students and families for whom online learning has not been an ideal model. Students have lost their connection with their school and their classmates. There is a significant focus on re-engagement of students that will continue over the summer and into the fall of 2021;
- The budget was developed with the assumption there would be a continued need for mental health and re-engagement supports, enhanced cleaning standards, investments in technology, the

continuation of a virtual school and the need for continued support for equity and diversity;

- There will be reductions in teaching staff as staffing was allocated at a level that recognizes this year's projected enrolment which reflected a minor increase in 2021. Staff took a conservative approach in estimating enrolment in the budget assumptions;
- Parental concerns impacted enrolment, especially at the kindergarten level;
- The budget assumes a continued reduction in participation rates in the Extended Day Program due to COVID-19;
- The 2021-2022 staff-recommended budget proposes a deficit of 1.6% or \$14.3 million dollars, which will require additional Ministry approval;
- The deficit being recommended is slightly lower than last year's amount of \$17.7 million;
- Staff are comfortable that this deficit can be managed, barring any worsening of the pandemic;
- The OCDSB has always overspent the special education funding from the Province, which has been a source of discussion with the Ministry. The District was encouraged to reduce spending in this area. The allocation for special education in the 2021-2022 budget has been prudent, but it is important to determine that the funds committed to special education are having the desired impact;
- The Extended Day and Childcare Program can anticipate a deficit for the coming year but staff will continue to work with the Province to obtain the support necessary for childcare operations. The District must continue to be a leader in childcare;
- Staff believe the deficit of \$18.7 million could be slightly lower at the fiscal year end, resulting in a slightly higher accumulated surplus;
- The deficit projected for 2021-2022 is \$14.3 million which would reduce the accumulated surplus to \$6.8 million. There is a draw against the accumulated surplus of \$8.7 million in commitment to support amortization expense;
- The OCDSB will be one of the school boards that will be in discussion with the Province about the program that would support boards in reimbursing some of the costs incurred and charged against reserves to ensure schools were ready to receive students safely in 2021; and

- The District is a large employer in the City of Ottawa with approximately 10,000 staff members who are committed to providing the best possible service to the children in the City of Ottawa.

CFO Carson noted that there may be a requirement to add additional meetings to the schedule to ensure approval of the budget before the end of June 2021. CFO Carson advised that the Ministry will provide updates and guidelines in August 2021, and there may be a need for additional resources as a result.

CFO Carson stated that staff have sufficient knowledge for the fall and a commitment from the Province to be comfortable recommending the 2021-2022 staff-recommended budget.

During the discussion and in response to questions the following information was provided:

- The 2% increase in the school operations benchmark line item is down from the previous amount, there are some areas where the District is in multi-year contracts and has not felt the impact of increases in pricing but overall there have been losses in purchasing power of supplies;
- The amount of the restricted accumulated surplus is \$8.7 million. The accumulated surplus at year end is projected to be \$6.8 million. There would be appropriations in a future year that would restore the accumulated surplus to fully fund the \$8.7 million which may increase or decrease over time, depending on the projects that are funded from accumulated surplus;
- At the end of the 2022 year, there would be a slight accumulated deficit from an operating perspective but there is capacity to allow for that and staff have worked with the Ministry to ensure they are aware of the approach the District has taken in support of students. There is a program in the Province to reimburse those school boards who had to use accumulated surplus to manage the cost of the COVID-19 response, although the details on the program have not yet been received;
- Staff carefully considered the prospect of being in an accumulated deficit but felt it was important to maintain the service to the District and not impact initiatives by making expenditure reductions;
- CFO Carson advised that it is too early to predict how many kindergarten students may enrol in District schools for the fall of 2021 as there historically has been considerable enrolment over the summer months and he noted he believed there would be greater growth than projected;

- CFO Carson noted he believed the District was on track to meet its legal obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) and are currently in compliance. There will be a significant cost to bring the District into compliance with the built environment standards, which have not been finalized and there is a future date for compliance. CFO Carson advised Trustee Lyra Evans that he would provide an update on information that was provided previously as part of the Q&A release;
- Facilities staff are in the process of compiling the information on ventilation work in a school-by-school presentation to share with trustees and the community. The bulk of the funding for ventilation was received in the 2020-2021 year and the CVRIS funding, depending on the rate of completion, will be reflected in the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 fiscal years;
- There are several components that make up the \$6.8 million accumulated surplus and one of the components is the \$8.7 million commitment to support amortization expenses and some of the other commitments are for business systems and budget carry forwards and accumulated deficit attached to the Extended Day Program;
- Facilities revenue is based on funding per student, when enrolment is lower, funding is lower. The expenditures cannot be reduced at the same rate. The Ministry did provide top-up funding in the past that has been modified and resulted in a decrease of funding. Funding was also adjusted to reflect changes in building occupancy as a result of COVID-19, but overall costs continued to increase, for example heating costs rose as a result of the amount of air exchanges. The cost of temporary accommodations (portables), both purchasing and moving, is reflected in the \$3.3 million shortfall in Facilities;
- The Deputy Minister provides approval of the deficit and any deficit elimination plan. Approval may not be received by the end of August 2021, but CFO Carson noted he was confident the District could commence operating in September 2021 and adjustments may have to be made in the 2023 year;
- CFO Carson noted that staff were not able to provide the equity investment summary in time for the meeting, but it would be included in the next Q&A release, which will reflect the changes in 2021-2022 as compared to the previous year;
- Appendix E to Report 21-047 reflects the changes in staffing and would reflect the investment in mental health supports;
- In response to a question from Trustee Campbell regarding the District's expenditure in special education funding versus other school

boards, CFO Carson noted that staff could provide that information in a future Q&A release;

- Staff did debate changes to central staff, which is operating at a reduced capacity, but determined that this was not the year to make recommendations without a well-contemplated plan. Investments in schools was the priority;
- In all departments, there is always an opportunity for outsourcing work that is managed within departmental operating budgets;
- Professional development (PD) funding is reflected in various lines in the budget, depending on areas of responsibility and source of funding and some are compliance related. Director Williams-Taylor noted that PD in 2020-2021 was fit for purpose and delivered mainly digitally and virtually. In person PD remains valuable, but in future there will be a combination of in-person and virtual. A range of changes in program delivery will occur over the fall related to de-streaming in the secondary curriculum, the new math curriculum, and mental health and the engagement of staff in setting conditions for learning. She noted that it is important to reflect on what has been improved in PD delivery during the 2021 year and not return fully to past practices;
- In response to a question from Trustee Scott regarding the total number of itinerant educational assistants (EAs), Superintendent Symmonds advised that he would review the staffing allocation and provide a response;
- The increase in EA allocation is related to the increase in specialized program classes;
- CFO Carson advised that in the past if trustees wished to make additions to the budget, rather than going in excess of the 1% of the accumulated surplus, they were asked to consider an equivalent reduction. The 2021-2022 staff recommended budget is made of many assumptions and there are uncertainties. He noted he would be very uncomfortable if there were more than \$500,000 in additions to the budget and asked trustees to provide staff with their intentions to add items as soon as possible.
- Superintendent McCoy advised that the reduction in early childhood educators (ECEs) will not impact kindergarten classes as they will continue to be staffed with an ECE. The reductions are tied to where there is a need to have staffing from early morning to late afternoon. Early Learning staff has identified that a core ECE will be staffed rather than ECEs to a specific classroom;



- The six additional principal/vice-principal positions were added to support the Ottawa-Carleton Virtual (OCV) school;
- CFO Carson advised that the investments in equity will include both OCDSB staff and partners with contractual agreements. The connection to the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap may not be as clear as hoped because of short timelines. Much of the work undertaken in the District with respect to equity, such as the identity-based data, crosses a number of departments;
- CFO Carson advised that the uncertainty in the secondary enrolment numbers is a result of determining students' full time equivalent and the challenge of the calculations as some must be done manually. The March enrolment numbers have not been verified;
- If enrolment in kindergarten were to increase by 150 students, there would be a need for approximately five (5) to seven (7) classes and would require the equivalent number of ECEs;
- In response to a question from Ms. Hendela regarding a loss of \$350,000 in the area of secondments, she requested that this information be included in the Q&A release;
- CFO Carson advised that there have been significant investments in technology and advised that staff will provide an update on the investments in chromebooks;
- In response to a question from Trustee Campbell about the backlog in the research department that has resulted from a shortage of human resources, CFO Carson committed to providing a response in the Q&A release;

Trustee Scott assumed the Chair.

- CFO Carson advised that funding through the GSN provides some additional certainty, provides more time to plan, and removes some of the reporting requirements that are a part of PPF grant funding;
- Staff were hesitant to make reductions in staff and services at this time. Staff continues to work with the Province to secure reimbursement funding. He noted there is significant growth in the City of Ottawa and that brings additional revenue to the District and it is prudent to rely on growth in the City;
- To qualify for the reimbursement funding school boards would have had to use the second percent of reserves;
- There will need to be a reconciliation between the funding that was received to respond to COVID-19 and the funds that were allocated

from the District's resources and there may negotiations with the Ministry over account allocations;

Trustee Schwartz resumed the chair.

\*\*\*Following a break at 9:13 pm the meeting was called to order at 9:20 p.m.\*\*\*

- The green climate fund remains at \$150,000. CFO Carson agreed to address where this amount can be found in the budget in the Q&A release;
- The unspent funds from the allocation of \$150,000 for parent engagement in the 2020-2021 budget will not be carried over in addition into the 2021-2022 year allocation. The Parent Involvement Committee could advocate for the unspent funds to be carried over or a trustee could request the carryover when decisions regarding departmental carryovers are being made in the fall;
- The addition of the evening supervisor in the Facilities department is a permanent position to return to a previous staffing structure;
- Superintendent McCoy advised that the case manager in the Labour Relations department would work directly with students as part of child protection and would work with the investigations advisor;
- The investigations advisor is a new role to respond to the backlog that has been identified in the past few years;
- The compensation specialist would ensure that evaluation processes, practices and job descriptions are up to date. This position will support the retention strategy and succession planning work that is being undertaken;
- In response to a question from Mr. Heidecker regarding a reduction of 1.9 FTE under the title Board Decision, Superintendent McCoy advised that she would review this item and provide a response in the Q&A release;
- In response to a question from Trustee Scott regarding the allocation of replacement staff, CFO Carson advised he and Manager Gardner would prepare a summary of replacement costs in the various areas; and
- Regarding occasional teachers CFO Carson noted that in previous years fund were overspent in this area. That budget for occasional teacher costs has increased for the 2021-2022 year.

6. New Business - Information and Inquiries

There was no new business.

7. Adjournment

Chair Schwartz noted the next meeting will take place on 9 June 2021 where delegations and debate will continue.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

---

Sandra Schwartz, Chair