

Board

Date 25 January 2022

Report No. 22-002

Enhancements to Board Administration Building Meeting Spaces

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PURPOSE:

1. To seek approval to proceed with necessary retrofits to the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board meeting spaces within the Administration building located at 133 Greenbank Road.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. Enhancing and modernizing the meeting spaces of the Board, its advisory committees and District staff supports the cultures of innovation and social responsibility as outlined in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. Enhancements to these spaces will create more accessible and welcoming environments to encourage participation in school board governance and allow for a greater audience and more transparent decision making. The meeting spaces will also permit accessible, dynamic and varied uses transforming the administration building into a centre for innovative learning.

CONTEXT:

3. Throughout the pandemic, the OCDSB has been meeting virtually. In considering plans for a future return to in person meetings, consideration must be given to how the virtual meeting experience has shaped both expectations and needs going forward. As much as there are limitations to virtual meetings, there are benefits in terms of access for different audiences. To achieve this balance, a return to in person meetings will require increased integration of technology.

The Board Room and other meeting spaces at the OCDSB Administration Building require both facility and audio visual renewal in order to support meetings going forward. The current Board Room configuration cannot

support a hybrid meeting. The Board Room was last renovated in 1998 to adjust the seating angle for visitors. Since that time the Board Room space and its associated audio visual (AV) technology has been upgraded in a piecemeal fashion adding components and equipment on an as needed basis, with minimal investment. Prior to the pandemic, the aging AV equipment in the room had become increasingly unreliable and identified in need of repair

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4. Planning for Hybrid Meetings

While there is a strong desire to return to in-person meetings, the flexibility and accessibility provided by electronic participation ensures trustees, committee members, delegations and the public are able to attend meetings without having to travel to the administration building or take time away from their schedules to attend. Enhancing hybrid meeting capabilities may help to reduce barriers to participation and further the Board's commitment to engagement.

Hybrid meetings are more complex to operate than fully in person or remote meetings. In order to ensure effective, quality hybrid meetings the current system must be upgraded with robust audio-visual equipment and reliable electrical systems. Participants in the room must be able to clearly hear those participating remotely and vice versa. All participants, especially those joining remotely must be able to see the faces of the in-person attendees, shared presentations, or other content. A hybrid meeting, done well, permits an equitable experience for all improving inclusivity, representation, and participation.

5. Audio-Visual Equipment

Given the specialized nature and scope of the work to retrofit the Board Room, staff enlisted the services of Edward J. Cuhaci and Associates Architects Inc. (Cuhaci) to assist in the needs assessment and redesign of the meeting spaces at the administration building.

On 26 November 2021 Memo 21-136, Required Accessibility Retrofits for Administration Building Meeting Spaces outlined the challenges with the current spaces and systems and identified proposed improvements to be undertaken in the 2022 fiscal year. The bulk of the project expenses are related to the AV upgrades within the boardroom, including the required electrical work to support these enhancements.

The recommended AV enhancements include:

- New speaker system;
- New microphones for trustees, staff committee members, delegations,
- New camera system
- The addition of space-appropriate LEWD screens to permit easier viewing of presentations, virtual participants, agendas and voting results;
- Array microphones for alternative, non-meeting configurations; and
- Assistive listening devised for accessible access to meeting video.

Audio Visual equipment has experienced a growth in demand during the pandemic. It also has been affected by supply chain issues. In order to prepare meeting rooms for hybrid meetings, it is important that staff have the ability to proceed to tendering and procuring to ensure the project can commence and be completed over the summer months in time for a possible resumption of in person meetings in the fall of 2022.

6. Flexible/Inclusive/Accessible Design

The design provided by Cuhaci allows for several different configurations of the Board room space as depicted in Appendix A. Two models represent typical board and committee meeting setups. The moveable/modular furniture allows for enough flexibility to ensure the room can be used for a variety of additional education-related purposes, from team building initiatives, to staff training days, town hall meetings, presentations and ceremonies.

In both of the setups for meetings, the Board of Trustees is seated, along with key staff and other committee members, around a large circular table. This arrangement is consistent with the standard seating arrangement for a governing board and allows for enhanced conversation. The public seating area is designed specifically for members of the public to observe their elected officials at work. The mostly circular arrangement for meetings is more welcoming for both participants and observers.

The new meeting room enhancements also afford greater levels of accessibility. From improved lighting which will improve the viewing of multiple screens, to assistive listening devices in the Board Room, these enhancements will allow for improved audio and video quality for those who elect to attend in person. Advancements in speakers and microphones will provide even sound coverage and improve the audio quality significantly. The large screens around the room and in the centre of the circle permit easy viewing for all meeting participants and observers.

In person meeting participants will be provided with microphones to ensure reliable sound. The microphones will be controlled by a touch panel with the audio output fed directly into the electronic meeting (i.e., Zoom or Google meet). Participants will bring their own device (laptop, iPad) and will have access to convenient power with wired connections available should wireless connectivity fail. In alternate configurations the system is equipped with table top microphone array systems that are plug and play and designed to pair and function with electronic meeting software.

The Board Room plan depicts a timer clock mounted at the front of the room near the large liquid crystal display (LCD) screen, staff are currently exploring additional options for timing to ensure all participants can see the timer.

7. Security Measures

Security is always a consideration in public meeting spaces. The flexible seating arrangement provides for the safety of participants. In both meeting setups, trustees and staff can be positioned so that they face the foyer and have easy egress to the

emergency exits at the front of the room. The seating reserved for observers will be clearly identified and permit egress through the foyer in the event of an emergency.

8. Improved Sightlines

One large screen will be mounted at the front of the room and two LCD screens will be mounted on either side of the room to improve visibility. Additionally, four screens will be mounted on mobile carts in the centre of the circular meeting table for in-person meeting participants. This will ensure that in-person participants no longer have to strain to view content on either the front or side screen. The centre monitors will house voice activated cameras which allow each speaker to be captured on the livestream when speaking.

9. WIFI

Business and Learning Technologies is currently engaged in Phase 2 of the Wifi Upgrade which will see greater coverage and access for staff and students across the District. In the Board Room and other meeting spaces within the administration building, additional WIFI access points will be added to ensure appropriate coverage, allowing for hybrid meetings. Business and Learning Technologies will align this work with the work facilities will be doing in the boardroom in order to achieve cost savings. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by August 2022.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

10. The estimate of the cost of the required enhancements is primarily for proper AV equipment in the Board Room. A key component of the cost is the retrofit fit work necessary to electrical and AV systems. The estimated cost of the project is \$1,965,239.24.

The Project will cover:

Boardroom (electrical, lighting, finishing*, audio-visual)	\$1,172,152.80
Furnishing for Boardroom (new modular furniture)	\$225,351.40
Trustee Committee Room (finishing*, electrical, lighting, audio-visual)	\$217,244.16
B400 (finishing*, electrical, audio-visual)	\$35,210.88
Architect and Engineering Fees	\$115,280.00
Consulting Fees	\$200,000.00
TOTAL (includes contingency)	\$1,965,239.24

Projects at administration buildings cannot be funded using typical renewal/renovation funding sources. The intent is to fund the project with operating reserves with the majority of the reserve funding supported through facilities and maintenance savings during the 2021-2022 school year.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

11. The enhancement project was developed through consultation with staff, the architect, AV specialists and electrical consultants to determine the project priorities. The design and estimate are reflective of these meetings.

Facilities staff will continue to work with Cuhaci to prepare final work plans that will allow construction during the balance of the school year and summer period, to permit completion by the fall of 2022.

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. THAT a project budget of \$1,965,239.24 (funded from Operating Reserves, accumulated operating surplus) be established for the purpose of upgrading meeting room facilities at the Administration Building; and
- B. That staff be directed to start the procurement process for the meeting room enhancements; and the Chair and Director be given authority to award the contract to the successful bidder if it is within budget.

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Appendix A-Cuhaci Design
Appendix B-AV Design