

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

Board Room

Monday, June 8, 2020

7:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Trustees Present:	Justine Bell, Donna Blackburn, Christine Boothby, Rob Campbell, Chris Ellis, Lyra Evans, Mark Fisher, Wendy Hough, Jennifer Jennekens, Keith Penny, Sandra Schwartz, Lynn Scott.
Staff Present:	Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director), Mike Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), Janice McCoy (Superintendent of Human Resources), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Curriculum), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Eric Hardie (Superintendent of Instruction), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Kevin Gardner (Manager of Finance), Sandy Owens (Manager of Business & Learning Technologies), Julie Cyr (Manager of Early Learning), Pamela LeMaistre (Manager of Human Resources), Diane Pernari-Hergert (Manager of Communications & Information Services), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Rebecca Grandis (Senior Board Coordinator), Charles D'Aoust (Coordinator of Budget Services), Amanda Pelkola (Board/Committee Committee).
Non-Voting Representatives Present:	Nancy Akehurst (OSSTF - ESP, PSSU, PSSP, EA, PECCS), Jennifer Capitani (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Jennifer Coleman (Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators Network (OCSSAN)), Malaka Hendela (OCASC), Wulf Heidecker (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario), Stacey Kay (Non Affiliated Staff), Rob Kirwan (Special Education Advisory Committee), David Wildman (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers Federation).

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

Chair Schwartz called the public session 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.

2. Approval of Agenda

**Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,
THAT the agenda be approved.
Carried**

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Matters for Discussion:

4.1 Memo 20-077, Budget Development Update

Your Committee had before it Memo 20-077, Budget Development Update and the accompanying PowerPoint presentation that outlined the status of the budget development process. Director Williams-Taylor noted that there have been significant delays in the budget process due to the Ministry of Education's delay in providing the Grants for Student Needs (GSN).

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carson noted that the Deputy Minister of Education has committed to provide the GSNs by mid-June, however this will not include information on additional funding nor the requirements that the Ministry will impose for September. CFO Carson stated that another critical element in the process is the calculation templates and technical documents to forecast grants; without this the budget process cannot be completed as legislated.

Given the aforementioned delays, CFO Carson informed the Committee that without knowing what will be included in the GSNs, a budget cannot be approved by the end of June. Making assumptions in order to approve the budget would limit the District's flexibility and may have negative consequences. However, it was noted that the District will provide a provisional budget, accounting for specific expenditures, at the Board meeting on 22 June 2020. The key items that require discussion include adjustments to comply with collective agreements and staff hiring. Depending on what information the province provides, such as GSNs and timelines to inform decisions, the District can provide a revised timeline and a broad overview of what the budget could resemble.

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

- Once the GSNs are announced, they will inform the revenue enhancements and or modifications that may be provided by the Ministry beyond existing funding;
- The District recommends reducing the number of upcoming Committee of the Whole Budget meetings due to the workload required in advance to prepare;
- Funding for secondary schools has been budgeted for 23:1 student staffing ratio, however the Ministry may amend language which would impact the plan;
- The Education Financial Information System (EFIS) is provided by the Ministry and used by Ontario school boards to report financial information to the Ministry for funding. If EFIS is received by the end of June, CFO Carson anticipates that staff could present a budget by 16 July 2020;
- The District requires flexibility to adjust to expense patterns and enrolments, which may not be known at the beginning of July. By the end of July, the District anticipates the budget could be approved;
- CFO Carson noted that some boards have established a budget approval timeline for the end of August, despite when GSNs are announced. It was recommended that the budget be approved before August, given staff vacations, which could impede the budget process. Additionally, August will be largely spent preparing for schools to receive students in the fall;
- Only 25 percent of the District's budget is discretionary for the Board to approve;
- In response to a query regarding the creation of a blended budget plan where some approvals are made in July and the final budget approved at the end of August, CFO Carson confirmed it is possible to implement a model to allow for more debate, consultation and discussion. He highlighted that delaying the process would increase the duration between Committee meetings, and that summer may impact the ability for quorum. He recommended a mid-August deadline;
- CFO Carson restated the need for key investments to be approved in preparation for schools reopening in September, specifically items related to safety, security and learning. There is a need to approve the hiring of additional educational assistants (EAs), as there has been an

increase in the number of specialized program classrooms and there are contract extensions that require approval;

- In response to a query regarding community outreach and consultations to obtain input on the return to school, it was noted that the Ministry has commenced consultations with expert panelists, to decide the format of learning in the fall. This is being done in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour to determine how these recommendations will be imposed and if there will be flexibility for adaptation;
- Director Williams-Taylor indicated that in preparation, the District has reviewed different models that illustrate what the back to school format could resemble. The District would like to engage the public and other participants in the plan, but the short timelines will make this a challenge;
- To an inquiry regarding the parameters for teacher's engagement in the return to school plan and how it will impact the District's budget, the following responses were provided:
 - The District has formed two collaborative forums that include school staff, principals, vice-principals and union partners. The forums aim to conceptualize the next steps;
 - The District will be informed on how to proceed by Ottawa Public Health as school openings are contingent on their direction;
 - There is a recognition that there will be changes due to the nature of the return, and the school context will look different than previously anticipated. The Ministry does recognize these adjustments will require additional investments but have not indicated what assistance will be provided, whether there will be additional funds or a reallocation of funds; and
 - CFO Carson stated the District is working to obtain opinions from staff and added that the federations are represented as part of the Committee.
- Increases in transportation costs should not be significant, despite physical distancing requirements and capacity, as there are limited vehicles and drivers. The District will be charged the same amount as 2019-2020 but will likely receive less service as a result. The District is considering contingency plans for efficient and effective methods to transport students but is not prepared to implement plans;
- For the purpose of building a budget, the District maintained the March projected enrolment numbers, but did assume that revenues will

decrease due to reduced international student enrolment. The Ottawa-Carleton Education Network (OCENET) projects that international secondary school enrolments, that are usually between 800-900 students, are anticipated to decrease to 400-500 students. Elementary enrolments are usually expected to have increases from immigration, but with the borders closed, lower enrolment is projected. As well, revenue attributed to kindergarten enrolment could be impacted while parents wait for additional information on what measures will be put in place at schools and in terms of transportation;

- The Ministry has indicated its intent to support priority areas such as mental health and well-being, extra cleaning and support for special education;
- Several trustees supported delaying the budget approval process, but would like final approvals to be established prior to the end of August;
- Director Williams-Taylor stated her support for plan 1 with budget approvals in place by 30 July (as outlined on page 2 of the presentation), as it allows the District to move forward and for staff to take vacation time. She added that all plans are dependent on what is received by the Ministry and assumes the inclusion of all the technical components that are required;
- CFO Carson stated the staff have considered methods to increase budget discussions and have increased transparency around what investments are being considered but in this situation the issue is with revenue uncertainty;
- Schools operate with a fixed system and the District does not have the ability to increase percentages and must work within the allocated funds. If a budget was created without pertinent information, all the negative possibilities would need to be taken into consideration, which could result in recommendations with large reductions in services and staffing. Staff are reluctant to propose recommendations until all of the information is received, in order to provide current service standards with enhancements. For example, it has been assumed that the budget will require additional funds to be allocated towards facilities for enhanced air filtration in schools and for the maintenance schedule to replace filters more frequently. In addition, fresh air exchange upgrades have corresponding increases to utility costs;
- Trustee Campbell indicated he was hesitant to approve a budget given the reduced revenue projections for international students, kindergarten enrolment and the possible impact on the extended day program (EDP) revenue if there is a COVID-19 second wave. CFO

Carson agreed the District has concerns but Superintendent McCoy is currently meeting with the Federations to determine if funds can be reallocated that were previously budgeted for prior to the new collective agreements. The District will defer making recommendations on some areas until the fall to increase flexibility; and

- Trustee Fisher expressed a preference for increased communications as frameworks can change from week to week. He encouraged a "modular budget" based on items that will not change, which may leave flexibility for other decisions such as transportation and staffing classrooms. CFO Carson agreed that the budget needs to be fluid to ensure that decisions are not made which could force the District to make adjustments that have negative consequences.

5. New Business - Information and Inquiries

There was no new business to report.

6. Scheduled Committee of the Whole Budget Meetings:

CFO Carson confirmed that the meeting on 15 June would be cancelled and be postponed until 22 June 2020.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Sandra Schwartz, Chair