



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

Board Room

**Monday, June 22,
2020**

6:30 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, Ganaaboute Gagne (Student Trustee), Prasith Wijeweera (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), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Curriculum), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Eric Hardie (Superintendent of Instruction), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Kevin Gardner (Manager of Finance), Sandy Owens (Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Richard Sinclair (Manager, Legal Services and Labour Relations), Pamela LeMaistre (Manager of Human Resources), Diane Pernari-Hergert (Manager of Communications & Information Services), Julie Cyr (Manager of Early Learning), Teri Adamthwaite (Coordinator of Financial Reporting), Charles D'Aoust (Coordinator of Budget Services), Sait Atas (Research Officer), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Rebecca Grandis (Senior Board Coordinator), Amanda Pelkola (Board/Committee Committee)

**Non-Voting
Representatives
Present:** Nancy Akehurst (OSSTF - ESP, PSSU, PSSP, EA, PECCS), Cathy Bailey (OSSTF Teachers/Occasional Teachers), Jennifer Capitani (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Jennifer Coleman (Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators Network (OCSSAN)), Troy Cluff, Elaine Hayles (Advisory Committee on Equity), Wulf Heidecker (Elementary

Teachers' Federation of Ontario), Karen Ivings (OSSTF-PSSP), Stacey Kay (Non-Affiliated Staff), Rob Kirwan (Special Education Advisory Committee), Jean Trant (SSP), 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 6:31 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.

Moved by Trustee Boothby

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Trustee Hough,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Matters for Action:

4.1 Report 20-058, Administrative and Support Staffing for 2020-2021

Director Williams-Taylor noted that Report 20-058, Administrative and Support Staffing for 2020-2021, includes supplementary staffing recommendations to the approved budget. It was highlighted that these positions are usually included in the complete budget package, however, there is a need to proceed with staffing these positions immediately to facilitate planning for next year.

Superintendent McCoy advised that the recommended administrative and support staff are predominantly in school positions and include key central department staffing positions. Additional recommendations will be presented during the 2020-2021 Budget process and the Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) will inform these decisions:

- The administrative and support staff are union positions from one of the five unions in the District, as well as union exempt in central departments at the board office;
- In general, administrative and support staff levels will remain stable until the analysis of the GSNs is complete;

- In order to meet collective agreement timelines and immediate needs, approval of the following proposed positions is recommended: educational assistants (EA), early childhood educators (ECE), school office and technician staffing, custodial and central department staffing;
- The addendum highlights the Support for Students Funding (SSF), one aspect of the central agreement, which provided funding to local school districts to support education worker positions. These funds are to be invested to create additional permanent positions to address special education, unique learning needs, mental health initiatives and employees who play a role in promoting safe, healthy and caring schools. Approximately \$3.1 million or 52.5 full time equivalent (FTE) is to be allocated proportionally across four bargaining units;
- In January 2020, the District increased the total number of EA positions to 775.0 FTE and is recommending an increase of 19.0 additional FTE to support the new specialized program classes. In addition, approximately 19.5 FTE positions (to be confirmed through bargaining) will be added to that 794.0 FTE. Discussions with local OSSTF representatives are on-going and the intention is to allocate these positions once concluded;
- At the Ministry of Education's direction, the District will enhance the Safe School Program and deliver social emotional support for students serving long-term suspensions or expulsions, in addition to the current academic goals. This will require specific expertise and therefore, a recommendation is being proposed for an additional 0.8 FTE social worker and a 0.5 FTE psychologist positions. It is anticipated that a portion will be funded by the SSF, as decided by the Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP) bargaining unit;
- The District is proposing that each kindergarten class have a teacher and ECE regardless of size, which would necessitate 411.0 FTE ECEs to support the core kindergarten program. In addition, 220.0 FTE ECEs are being recommended to staff the District's Extended Day Programs (EDP). The District has not determined how the EDP will operate but ECEs are essential to the program's operations. This results in a total of 631.0 FTE ECEs, that are subject to adjustment depending on kindergarten and EDP enrolment fluctuations;
- Elementary library technical support varies depending on school size, but due to the closure of J.H. Putman Public School and based on enrolment for 2020-2021, there is a decrease of 2.0 FTE. In secondary schools technician allocations have been adjusted to redeploy 16.0 FTE Instructional Student Support Technicians (ISSTs) to field

technicians, who will offer support to a family of schools and their information technology (IT) requirements;

- School office positions will be staffed once discussions with unions have concluded;
- The District anticipates an increased need in custodial services to prepare for the return in the fall. There are an estimated 16.6 FTE additional positions that will be funded through the SSF within the Plant Support Staff Unit (PSSU) bargaining unit. Although bargaining has not concluded, the District will proceed to allocate these positions, subject to funding and will make additional recommendations later this summer;
- As part of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, and in order to assist in the response to the pandemic and a return to work, it is being recommended that an additional 2.0 FTE team lead positions be approved to support Business and Learning Technologies (B<), one responsible for security and identity and the other for learning technology specialists; and
- Staff are recommending 1.0 FTE for an administrative position to support the Human Rights and Equity Advisor (HREA).

Moved by Trustee Campbell,

THAT the administrative and support staffing, as outlined in the Addendum to Report No. 20-058, be approved for purposes of the 2020-2021 annual operating budget.

During question period, the following points were noted:

- Recommendations for the increase in EA positions are based on several factors. Superintendent Symmonds monitors data and aligns resources accordingly, but in some cases, anomalies increase the need. It was noted that EA support is only one support offered and that the additional specialized education classes have also resulted in the need for additional staff;
- It was confirmed that School Resource Officer (SRO) positions are not included in the funding recommended in Report 20-058;
- In response to a query regarding the anticipated difficulty of filling the speech language pathologist positions, Superintendent Symmonds acknowledged the challenge in hiring EAs, psychologists and other professional supports and the high level of turnover. Staff are working with Human Resources (HR) to develop strategies to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of these positions. In the past, the

OCDSB has also extended the hiring process to include international recruitment efforts;

- Trustee Bell noted for the record, her discomfort approving the plan until staff outline a COVID-19 proposal and action plan. Trustee Bell stated that unless additional mental health support staff are proposed to be hired now, she is concerned these positions will not be filled by September. In response to her questions and comments, the following responses were provided:
 - Director Williams-Taylor noted the challenge is that the full impact of COVID-19 has yet to be realized. The District is looking at the impact and contemplating how to redirect current resources and make adjustments to accommodate student needs. Funds have been allocated to summer programs that will prepare vulnerable students to return in the fall. Staff will evaluate the needs, then develop a full implementation plan;
 - Superintendent Symmonds noted the District is collaborating with its coterminous partners in order to devise a plan for the fall. It is anticipated that most students will be accommodated, however the model will be fluid to allow flexibility. A set routine will be developed outlining professionals' roles and adjustments to their routines can be made to address emerging needs. Learning Support Services (LSS) staff are working with community partners to look at supports for students. Mental health plans are forthcoming, but they are shifting as Mental Health Ontario is providing guidance; and
 - In response to a question from Trustee Bell regarding how the District could best support underserved students in the future, Superintendent Symmonds highlighted that in 2019, the District outlined a three-year mental health initiative, but it has experienced delays due to unexpected priorities. LSS will continue its work on the initiative in the 2020-2021 school year.
- Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carson noted that the GSNs announcement date was unknown when the report was being prepared, and although they were released 19 June, there was no time for analysis and the District needed to proceed with providing recommendations in order to recruit and assign EAs to schools for September. The District also planned for the anticipated challenges that will be experienced during the summer;
- If the recommendation were to be approved, the overall non-capital budget spent on overall academic staffing would be approximately \$3.0 million;

- In response to a query questioning the possibility of re-evaluating this recommendation at a later date if approved, the following responses were provided by staff:
 - CFO Carson replied that without reviewing governance bylaws, in his opinion this would not be feasible as the hiring process would have commenced. It was highlighted that only the minimum number of administrative and support staff have been requested in this proposal, to ensure schools can function in September; and
 - Superintendent McCoy noted that some positions funded by the SSF, introduced as a result of bargaining, have been established with an understanding that they will be implemented/allocated as directed. There are parameters which govern how the funds are to be applied. Unions play a significant role as to how these funds are allocated.
- Trustee Blackburn acknowledged the work of staff and highlighted that the proposal is a preliminary part of the process, and there are still many unknown variables. She supported hiring the staff outlined in the report and reminded trustees that staff and the District have committed to student well-being;
- Trustee Scott highlighted the importance of making decisions now owing to time constraints. Regarding reconsideration, these positions in particular are essential and the Board can add more during the course of approval;
- In response to a query regarding the HREA support position, Director Williams-Taylor responded that the HREA is a union exempt, senior level role that is the equivalent to a manager. However, they would not be a member of the senior team and would report to the Director. If this role is approved, this individual would be the one person reporting to the HREA and they would have responsibilities to assist the HREA in conducting investigations and in documenting research and follow up;
- Over the last 12-14 months the role of ISST has shifted, secondary schools can allocate their own technician, however not all have a full-time or even part-time ISST. Regarding the newly designed model, the 9 technicians currently in B< would be supplemented by the additional 16 technicians, totalling 25. Those numbers would allow support of both elementary and secondary schools, with each supporting a family of schools and also offering central support. In addition, Superintendent Lehman noted the job description has been amended, with input from union partners, to include support to students and staff in schools and as necessary, but also act as a

front-line support to assist families with technical issues that arise during Learning at Home;

- In regard to a query regarding EAs and the data that was reviewed to identify the need, the following responses were provided:
 - Director Williams-Taylor highlighted that Individual Education Plans (IEPs), observations and evolving needs identified by teachers, inform the decisions. This information is not static data and there is no algorithm used; and
 - Superintendent Symmonds added that each spring, schools submit an assessment of student needs. This, along with a variety of other aspects such as the nature of program classes, the number of students having an IEP, and individual learning profiles for students that require EA allocations, are considered when making proposals. The review involves LSS staff, who are part of multidisciplinary teams at each school, that assist in providing a full perspective not captured in written submissions. This is continually reviewed and updated to include new students to the District that may not have been included or to reflect a change in situation. The feedback staff received indicates there is a need for additional allocation in the fall. The proposal would provide the ability to allocate emergency EAs a few days a week when needs arise, to assist a student's transition.
- Trustee Ellis confirmed his understanding of the allocations and noted the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) may wish to explore this topic more in-depth;
- Additional clarification was requested on the Safe School Program, and in response the following points were made:
 - Director Williams-Taylor highlighted that this program belongs to a portfolio outside of special education. The focus of this program is to address the needs of students that have been removed from school due to suspension or expulsion. Staff recognize that there is a need to address social emotional needs that have led students to have disciplinary challenges. The goal is to provide assistance to them in order to facilitate their successful return to school;
 - Superintendent Farrish noted the program applies to students on long-term suspension or expulsion and that it is a measured part of progressive discipline, not directed towards students experiencing exclusion; and

- Regarding the number of students in need of these services, it was noted that the *Education Act* has been amended to include social emotional assistance as part of a student's action plan. The academic and social emotional goals must be achieved before a student can re-enter school after an expulsion. The intention is for students to achieve growth, to make better decisions, self-regulate and help them in the future to deal with events that brought them into the situation.
- In response to whether the additional 20.0 EAs funded by the SSFs were superfluous, Superintendent Symmonds stated additional EAs will help augment support for students in the District. New, emerging and changing needs will be supported by these positions. Although the intention is to have students be successful on an independent basis, EA assistance will be provided and decreased as needs change.

Moved by Trustee Campbell,

THAT the administrative and support staffing, as outlined in the Addendum to Report No. 20-058, be approved for purposes of the 2020-2021 annual operating budget.

Carried

5. Matters for Discussion:

5.1 Memo 20-084, 2020-2021 Grant Announcements

Director Williams-Taylor referenced Memo 20-084 regarding the 2020-2021 grant announcements and noted that the District will be seeking further clarification from the Ministry.

CFO Carson noted that Manager Gardner has been reviewing and analyzing the GSNs. The District did not anticipate the \$25.0 million provided to school boards in funding to assist in extraordinary costs related to COVID-19. It is assumed that based on the total of pupils in the District, four percent or approximately \$1.0 million will be allocated towards student mental health, however, no details have been explicitly provided on the distribution.

The District was disappointed that the Ministry did not outline how school board funding could be impacted in situations where students have an excess of 34-credits. While the Ministry has not provided any further explanation, they have stated they would continue to monitor the situation.

The benchmarks reflected new class sizes and provided a small increase in funding by adding one additional supply teacher to cover teachers on

sick leave. A two percent inflationary increase was provided to cover the cost of supplies and for school operations.

It was unfortunate that the Student Transportation Grant maintained the previous year's funding level and that no inflationary factors were considered. Previously an increase of 1-2 percent was provided to reflect partial increases in costs. The impact it will have on budgets should be realized by the end of June.

The District anticipates additional COVID-19 supports will be provided, in addition to what has been proposed. The Ministry has stated that additional funds would be allocated for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and enhanced cleaning that have been directed to the SSFs.

The province has indicated that the deadline for budget submission is 19 August 2020.

During the question period, the following points were noted:

- In response to a query from Trustee Boothby regarding the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Priorities and Partnership Fund (PPF), CFO Carson responded that the purpose is to force schools to receive annually funded programs outside of the fiscal year. If it were to be transferred to the GSNs it has a level of permanence. CFO Carson was not aware what aspects would be shifted or the conditions or limitations but noted that in some cases, it has provided more flexibility;
- CFO Carson stated additional information may be released in the spring of 2021 to assist in the planning of the SHSMs for the 2021-2022 school year. Currently there is no concern as the commitment to experiential learning exists, as long as the funds are available;
- CFO Carson noted that the District continues to raise the issue of capital funding with the province and an announcement should be made shortly; and
- In regard to a query surrounding transportation shortfalls resulting from physical distancing and if the Ministry has provided any direction or assistance, CFO Carson responded that the Ministry is aware of the potential risks, but no commitment has been made to provide assistance. With regards to EDP and childcare, the province did notify municipal service managers that they intended to cover a portion of the school board's costs that would have been otherwise covered by a subsidy. The District is hopeful similar assistance would be provided next year if a second wave of COVID-19 occurs.

6. New Business - Information and Inquiries

There was no new business to report.

7. Scheduled Committee of the Whole Budget Meetings

CFO Carson thanked Nancy Akehurst for her long-standing membership on the Committee and for all her contributions. Ms. Akehurst recognized that Cathy Bailey is also retiring and thanked her for her contributions.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Sandra Schwartz, Chair