

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, BUDGET REPORT

**Tuesday, July 21, 2020
7:00 pm
Zoom Meeting**

Trustees Present: Justine Bell, 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), Janice McCoy (Superintendent of Human Resources), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), 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), Nadia Towaj (Superintendent of Program and Learning K-12), Kevin Gardner (Manager of Finance), Sandy Owens (Manager of Business & Learning Technologies), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Karyn Carty Ostafichuk (Manager of Planning), Diane Pernari-Hergert (Manager of Communications & Information Services), Sandra Lloyd (Manager of Risk and Supply Chain Management), Richard Sinclair, (Manager of Labour Relations and Legal Services), Charles D'Aoust (Coordinator of Budget Services), Teri Adamthwaite (Coordinator of Financial Reporting), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Rebecca Grandis (Senior Board Coordinator), Amanda Pelkola (Board/Committee Coordinator).

Non-Voting Representatives Present: Jennifer Capitani, (OCEOC); Jennifer Coleman (OCSSAN); Wulf Heidecker, (ETFO); Stephanie Kirkey, (OSSTF-Teachers); Jean Trant (OSSTF-SSP), Kelly Granum (OSSTF-OT); David Wildman, (OCEOTA); Melodie Gondek, (OSSTF-ESP); Troy Cluff (PSSU); Malaka Hendela, (OCASC); Harvey Brown (ACE); Connie Allen (SEAC); Rob Kirwan (SEAC) and Non-affiliated Staff, Stacey Kay.

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

Chair Schwartz called the public session to order at 7:07 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 Fisher

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Delegations

3.1 Miriam Rabkin, For Our Kids Ottawa/Gatineau, re: Environmentally Friendly PPE and Alternative Transportation

Representing For Our Kids Ottawa, a group that advocates for a safe, green, equitable world for children to grow, Ms. Miriam Rabkin spoke to the concerns of the organization around environmentally friendly personal protective equipment (PPE), alternative transportation for students and the status of the OCDSB Green Climate fund. Ms. Rabkin urged the District to ensure that students are provided with as much outdoor time as possible in the coming school year for their physical and mental well-being, as well as that of staff. For Our Kids Ottawa looks forward to working with the OCDSB to build a future that is sustainable and provides opportunities for environmental learning and stewardship.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carson thanked Ms. Rabkin for her suggestions and committed to providing a written response to her concerns.

4. Presentation

4.1 Report 20-063, 2020-2021 Staff-Recommended Budget

Your Committee had before it Report 20-063, 2020-2021 Staff-Recommended Budget.

Director Williams-Taylor noted that supplemental information was attached to the agenda to provide additional information on priorities previously identified by trustees. The report from the trustee retreat was included and a memo No. 20-100, Environmental Initiatives, was circulated earlier that provided an update on the environmental fund project. Staff wanted to reinforce that these initiatives are still a priority and that resources will be redirected in support of this work. The Director thanked CFO Carson and his team for their dedication to this work in a most unusual year.

CFO Carson thanked parents, staff, members of the community, Committee of the Whole (COW) Budget members and trustees for their patience with the delays in presenting the recommendation. He noted that there has never been a time where there has been such great uncertainty. The uncertainty is likely to continue, and the information presented tonight may well change by the next COW Budget meeting on 11 August. CFO Carson noted that Superintendent McCoy, Manager Gardner and Budget Coordinator D'Aoust were key participants in bringing this report together.

With the aid of a Powerpoint presentation the following points were noted.

- The Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) were announced on 19 June 2020 and represent 89% of the District's operating revenues. Changes in the GSNs include funding benchmarks adjusted for compensation increases; and the new Supports for Students Fund (SSF). Mental health workers in schools and experiential learning funds were transferred to the GSNs from the Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF). The school operations benchmark funding was increased by 2% and secondary classrooms are now funded at 23:1;
- The development of the annual budget is guided by the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, the challenge is to align the available resources to maximize the three priorities;
- COVID-19 had an impact on budget assumptions. A provision of \$4.0 million was included in the staff-recommended budget to respond to COVID-19 extraordinary costs of enhanced cleaning protocols, acquisition of supplies and PPE and providing technical equipment to ensure the continuity of learning;
- The staff-recommended budget proposes a deficit of almost 2% or \$17.2 million, this proposed deficit will require Ministry of Education approval as it exceeds 1%, which is deemed a compliant budget. A high-level deficit elimination plan is proposed to see a balanced budget in 2021-2022;
- The 2020-2021 Budget reflects a net increase in revenues of \$19.4 million and an increase in expenses of \$28.1 million as a result of cost of living adjustments established by collective agreements, an adjustment to the employer's contribution to benefit plans and investments in special education and information technology security;
- The projected accumulated surplus for 2019-2020 is \$36.8 million and for 2020-2021 is \$19.6 million;
- Significant factors in the shortfall of \$17.2 million are a result of the loss of revenue from international students, secondary teaching staff moving to the funded classroom average of 23:1, extraordinary

COVID-19 costs, transportation costs, instructional spending and asset amortization;

- Recommended staffing changes in the 2020-2021 Staff-Recommended Budget include an increase of 32.96 FTE positions: 21.0 FTE elementary teachers (funded from SSF); 10.26 FTE learning assistants; 0.30 FTE reduction in special education system classes; a 1.0 FTE community partnership position; and a 1.0 FTE Human Rights and Equity Advisor support position (funded by PPF); and
- The upcoming 11 August 2020 meeting will include delegations and debate will commence. Subsequent meetings are scheduled for 13 August 2020 and 18 August 2020.

CFO Carson noted that Report 20-063, 2020-2021 Staff-Recommended Budget, highlighted changes that have occurred from the previous budget to date, outlined emerging issues and spoke to the uncertainties of future funding. The province will look to assess the experience of the return to school in the fall to determine if additional revenues will be provided to school boards.

CFO Carson cautioned that there is a legal requirement under *the Education Act* to approve a budget by 1 September 2020. The 2020-2021 Budget has been developed to allow staff to carry out the work to see the safe return of students in the fall.

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

- In anticipation of the possibility of students choosing remote learning and how this would be staffed, CFO Carson noted that he was confident that remote learning could be managed with the existing staffing complement;
- CFO Carson was confident that the request to use 2% of the accumulated surplus would be approved by the Ministry;
- The cost for managing the three different return to school scenarios would see a slight savings in the full remote learning model in the areas of utilities, transportation costs and staff replacement costs, the hybrid and full return to school models would see very similar costs;
- Enhanced cleaning costs will be managed through the \$4.0 million COVID-19 contingency funds and the existing budget;
- Community Use of Schools will not be available until January in an effort to reduce additional people in District facilities and to provide custodial staff with time in the evening to focus on cleaning. Should it

be determined that, as a result of a lack of resources, there is a need in the community for the use of a District facility, every effort will be made to meet the need;

- In response to a request from Trustee Bell to provide a risk assessment of the COVID-related investments and the impact on equity seeking groups, CFO Carson agreed to provide this information for the August meeting;
- The Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) continues to look at alternate transportation such as the walking school bus. There is a concern about increased traffic around schools as parents will opt to transport their children to school in the fall;
- It is possible there will be a shift of students between coterminous school boards as families seek to avoid busing and look to schools closer to home. The OCDSB has the largest number of schools in the City and it is likely there will be a net increase in enrollment;
- Ms. Hendela inquired as to why there were no specific details in the budget around the infrastructure in place for handwashing, sanitizer, and air quality testing; and whether the Ottawa-Carleton Education Network (OCENET) would continue to operate. In response, CFO Carson confirmed that staff are looking at the infrastructure and would provide a response through the budget questions and answers document. Regarding air quality testing, staff has been conducting assessments on heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems since May. OCENET will continue to operate, even with reduced revenues it is still a net provider for the Board;
- Regarding assumptions around staff sick leave costs, CFO Carson noted that staff replacement costs are a pressure point and the provision in the budget may not be sufficient. Staff used caution when estimating and should there be an outbreak, staff would address this with the Ministry. Staff will have a better idea when the 31 October enrollment numbers are available;
- Trustee Scott asked that, for the August COW Budget meetings, staff provide clearer links to the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan and to the specific aspects of COVID re-entry planning and the costs associated. She asked that staff look to a reallocation of existing resources, rather than adding new dollars. Priorities may need to change;
- In response to questions from Mr. Cluff regarding enhanced cleaning, CFO Carson responded that the budget included an additional 16.0 FTE custodial staff. There will need to be a reassignment of staff and a review of the cleaning work to be undertaken;

- In response to a question from Trustee Campbell about the Extended Day Program (EDP) and the budget assuming a full return, CFO Carson advised that staff are assuming a full return of the EDP and expecting the same financial support from the province, through the City. The Ministry did confirm the District would be eligible for funding, similar to the wage subsidy funding offered to businesses;
- The details regarding school council funding have not been fully addressed in a specific line item, but CFO Carson did confirm there would be funds allocated for parent engagement and development and committed to provide Ms. Hendela with details; and

Vice-Chair Penny assumed the chair.

- In response to a question from Trustee Schwartz about repurposing grants to provide for measures beyond enhanced cleaning such as HVAC improvement and the timeframe required to conduct such work, CFO Carson noted that rules around facilities renewal and school condition funding are very strict but staff may be able to look to minor capital improvement in areas that would not require Ministry approval to conduct the work. It is not possible to speak to timeframes to complete this work as each site has its own challenges.

Trustee Schwartz resumed the chair.

5. New Business - Information and Inquiries

There was no new business.

6. Scheduled Committee of the Whole Budget Meetings

The next meeting of COW Budget is taking place, by ZOOM, Tuesday 11 August 2020 at 7:00 p.m. where delegations will be heard and debate will continue. Additional meetings will be held on 13 August 2020 and 18 August 2020.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Sandra Schwartz, Chair