

Highlights of the Board of Trustees Meeting

Friday, September 15, 2017

STRUCTURAL REVIEW

Trustees received a Structural Review Report of Central Office as information. The review was to identify potential improvements for effective and efficient operations and acknowledge existing strengths, and was to include interviews with senior administration, Central Office staff, school principals and others.

The review was seen as a natural next step following the organizational review and board policy work, by deepening the board's understanding of Palliser's existing strengths and how it can best turn board vision to action.

Trustee Debbie Laturnus moved to instruct and authorize the Superintendent, or designate, to commence implementation of the 'Immediate Implementation' Recommendations in the Sept. 15, 2017 Organizational Structure Review Report, as soon as possible. The motion was carried.

BOARD FINANCES

Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun provided the Board with an update on the 2016-2017 administration and board governance budget, as requested, noting at this point Palliser is about \$100,000 over the administrative cap.

The province allows the budget for board governance and administration to account for no more than 3.6 per cent of a school jurisdiction's total budget. At present, Braun said Palliser sits at about 3.7 per cent. If a school jurisdiction is still over that cap when audited, it's required to explain the reasons. He did point out Palliser was under the cap last year.

Despite paying salaries for both a superintendent and acting superintendent, administration expenses are more than \$55,000 under budget. A decrease in benefits paid out and less travel for senior administration, as well as lower legal and consultant costs, were among the areas of savings.

Braun said the board governance budget, on the other hand, was sitting at about \$534,000, which is more than \$160,000 over budget, with several trustee expense claims and consultant fees still to come. The areas where the board has seen a significant increase over budget include the cost of consultants, lawyers and expenses related to hosting additional meetings, lunches and the like.

CAPITAL PLAN UPDATE

The Board of Trustees was provided an update by Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun in light of a new submission process Alberta Education put into place allowing revisions on capital plan priorities.

The board was told there are no recommended changes, with Palliser's priority remaining the construction of a new Huntsville School. Braun said Ferrari Westwood Babits Architects has been appointed to develop plans for the new school, with the project run by the province with input from

Palliser and the school community. Site work evaluation is underway to come up with an exact location for the new school on the existing property.

ENROLMENT UPDATE

Secretary-Treasurer Wayne Braun informed trustees the latest student enrolment count for Palliser Regional Schools was 8,113. While that is shy of the projected enrolment figure of 8,188, he pointed out those numbers will rise with the late addition of students expected at the Calgary Islamic School as well as the Palliser Beyond Borders outreach program.

Braun said there are concerns with a drop of 22 students at Picture Butte High School, although some of those may be attending the newly modernized Noble Central School, which has seen an increase in about 30 students.

Numbers are also down in some of the faith-based alternative programs in Calgary, said Braun, with some of that likely linked to the economy and the opening of some new public schools in the area.

A drop of 50 students, he noted, means the loss of about \$500,000 in per-student funding supplied by the province.

ELECTION PARTICIPATION URGED

In an effort to encourage Palliser parents to support democracy, trustees have asked that a letter be sent home with children in relation to Election Day Oct. 16.

The letter will explain the role of trustees, electoral boundaries and other voting information as there will be ballots cast in two of six Palliser wards, with the remainder won by acclamation. Similar information is also to be posted on the division website.

E-CIGARETTES UNDER REVIEW

Palliser Regional Schools senior administration was asked to look at revising the rules as to the use of tobacco on school property.

Trustee Craig Whitehead asked that the policy be revised to include vaping, which is the act of inhaling and exhaling the water vapor produced by an electric device called a vaporizer or e-cigarette.

TRAFFIC CONCERNS

The Board of Trustees will request a meeting with Coaldale Town Council to discuss concerns that proposed road changes there could impact student safety.

Palliser's superintendent of schools and transportation services supervisor will be asked to join them in the conversation about a proposed new transportation route on the east side of R.I. Baker Middle School and concerns it will likely mean increased traffic through the area.

EMERGENCY PLANS

Palliser trustees approved a motion to allow Jennie Emery Elementary School as a possible reception centre in the event of an emergency.

The request was made by the Town of Coaldale, which was looking for a facility large enough to serve as an evacuation site in the event of an emergency.

ITEMS DEFERRED

The Board deferred discussion of several agenda items – including citizens forum at Board meetings, the ombudsperson position and the secretary-treasurer position – until its next meeting.

Trustees voted to hold another Board meeting Tuesday, September 26 to deal with those and other items. Without scheduling an additional meeting, and given the timing of the election, it would be six weeks between meetings for trustees.