



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE & FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, February 14, 2017

School Board Office - 8:30 a.m.

Present: D. Stevenson (in the Chair); P. Dorsman, Trustee; C. Kennedy, Superintendent of Schools; J. Leiterman, Secretary Treasurer; K. Johnson, Assistant Secretary Treasurer; J. Brown, Manager of Finance; N. Mann, Manager of Purchasing and Transportation; Leo Reyes, Supervisor of Facilities

Stakeholder Representation: M. LaBounty (WVAA); A. Milavsky (DPAC); R. Millard (WVTA); B. Scott (WVMEA)

Absent: W. Hickey, Director of Facilities

The Secretary Treasurer apologized on behalf of the Director of Facilities, who was unexpectedly unable to attend.

1. School Enhancement Program (SEP) update

The Secretary Treasurer reminded the committee that this is the second year of this new funding stream, which deals with projects too expensive to draw on the operating grant, but too small for capital plan funding. This year, West Vancouver was awarded funding for two projects under the SEP: the Ridgeview roof project completed last fall; and the fire alarm upgrades at various sites, which should be completed by the beginning of March. Total funding for both projects is approximately \$987,000.

An announcement regarding next year's SEP is expected in March.

2. Classroom Redesign Working Group and Art Institute of Vancouver

The Secretary Treasurer said it was a shame that the Director of Facilities could not be present, as this initiative is his and is good news for the district. It began at Chartwell, where a PAC member knew someone at the Art Institute of Vancouver. For their final capstone project, students designed classrooms for the Chartwell learning commons. The results were very professional and very helpful and, as a result, the Director of Facilities wants to put together a library of designs for reference. As well, a catalogue of standardized furniture will be created, with items that facilities can assemble ahead of time. These standardized designs and options will be far more efficient and cost effective, and should reduce project completion from 4 – 6 weeks to about half that time. The Manager of Purchasing noted that the designs will be used by the district redesign committee when working with schools to modernize spaces. The Superintendent is talking to the Dean at the Art Institute and it is likely that this will be an ongoing capstone project for senior students each year. It is a great example of students helping students, and is great for us as well, as there is no charge for the designs. It was noted that we also hope that students will undertake a project to digitize

our building plans, something which has been required for a long time, but was cost-prohibitive.

3. Freedom of Information (FOIPA) request

The Secretary Treasurer noted that we have not had many FOIPA requests lately, but that a recent one from CUPE was sent to all districts in the province. The request is related to the recent Supreme Court decision and how the stringent funding guidelines may have affected their members. As we are not a CUPE district, they modified their questions and the answers revealed some encouraging information.

They asked how many education assistants (EAs) we have employed each year since 2012. In 2012/13, there were 115 EAs in West Vancouver Schools. In 2016/17, this has risen to 132, and there will likely be another increase for the 2017/18 school year.

A question was asked regarding wait times for psychoeducational assessments and the average wait time in West Vancouver is one year, down from two years, which is exceptional. This is a direct result of the LIF/TEF funding. It was noted, however, that in West Vancouver, student supports are put in place as soon as a student is identified through a school-based team meeting, even before the assessment is done. The assessment helps to refine those supports, once completed. The numbers show that not only has the wait time decreased, but that the number of assessments completed has increased, from 71 in 2012/13 to 93 in 2015/16.

The final question was regarding bus service – what we provide, whether there has been a reduction due to lack of funding, whether we employ union members as drivers, and whether the number of union staff has been reduced. Bus service in West Vancouver Schools has always been contracted out, so we do not employ union drivers. We have maintained service levels according to provincial walk-limits and re-introduced Friday service on Bowen Island in 2016/17 as a result of the recent transportation funding grant award.

4. VOIP update

The introduction of voice over internet protocol (VOIP) across the district has been looming for many years, as our telephone infrastructure is outdated and a growing area of concern. The company that provided our equipment is long gone and Telus has to hire retirees as contractors to deal with any issues that arise. There have been two issues that have prevented the widespread introduction of VOIP: we did not want to be the first district to use it on a universal basis; and the considerable cost. Recent issues with the telephone and voicemail system have brought VOIP back into consideration. Ecole Cedardale has been the district's trial site, where VOIP was implemented in July 2016. After a few initial bugs the system has been working well. In the fall of 2016 we contracted for an assessment of our infrastructure, in order to have the district ready to receive a turn-key VOIP solution. To that end, we have detailed what each site has in place and have added additional switches where necessary. A purchasing committee has been struck, consisting of Helen Setsikas (IT), Nick Mann (purchasing), Wade Hickey (facilities), Julia Leiterman (finance), and Sean Nosek (technology). The committee is currently analyzing RFP samples from other districts and going through the draft RFP created by Nick. It is anticipated that our RFP will be posted in late March. Once a provider has been chosen, VOIP should be rolled out at all sites across the district within

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12 months. The process will likely begin with facilities and the school board office, followed by the two primary sites, and then the rest of the schools. No schools will undergo any conversions in September.

Although there is an initial outlay of approximately \$350,000, the payback is very fast and costs should be recovered within five years. The current Telus land lines cost approximately \$12,500 per month, or \$150,000 per year. VOIP will cost approximately \$1,400 per month, or \$16,800 per year. After the five years, there will be roughly \$133,000 realized in savings each year. It was noted the implementation of VOIP will be part of next year's AFG project slate.

A landline will be maintained at each site for 911 and elevator services.

5. 2017/18 Enrollment estimate

The Secretary Treasurer reviewed an enrollment report due to the ministry shortly. The numbers are compiled from several sources: administrator estimates at the end of January; Baragar information, drawn primarily from tax return information; and ministry estimates, based on federal data. Estimate accuracy is compared from year to year and it was noted that it is sometimes difficult to estimate out of district numbers at this time of year. To that end, our estimates are always conservative, as these are the student FTE figures on which the preliminary budget is based and we wish to avoid overestimating the operating grant we will receive. The Secretary-Treasurer noted that as a result of recent unexpected increases in numbers across the province which left the ministry short, districts are being asked to be less conservative than in the past. In a further push for accuracy, the report must now be re-filed in June as well.

For 2017/18, we are estimating a small drop of 86 FTE from the current year. The ministry estimates a drop of 183 FTE. We also anticipate continued growth in ELL numbers, and a small increase in SpEd and Ab Ed students. In response to a question from Mr. Millard of the WVTA, it was confirmed that those numbers would affect class composition and drive the higher EA numbers mentioned earlier.

6. 2016/17 Amended Budget

The Secretary Treasurer gave a brief update on the amended revenue figures reviewed at the January committee meeting. There are no substantial changes, simply a few housekeeping items about how/where amounts are recorded, according to ministry requirements and audit recommendations. As a result of higher than anticipated student enrollment and international FTEs, the new transportation grant, the return of year 2 administrative savings, and the inclusion of homestay fees and new academies, overall revenue was \$3.5 million higher than the preliminary budget. There are associated expenses, however.

Significant factors relating to expenses were reviewed, separated into four areas: instruction; administration; operations / maintenance; and transportation. Instruction expenses increased by \$2.4 million over preliminary figures, mainly due to increased salary and benefit costs, the hiring of more EAs, and international homestay costs. Administrative costs increased by \$300,000 as a result of increased salary and benefits, and IT services and supplies. Operations / maintenance expenses decreased by \$102,000 compared to preliminary figures, as staff retirements meant a decline in salary and

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associated benefit costs. There was a slight increase in utility costs, but they were offset by the savings in other areas. Transportation costs increased by \$30,000 as Friday bus service was reintroduced on Bowen Island, but this is covered by the new transportation grant, which is expected to be ongoing. In total, expenses were \$2.6 million higher than the preliminary budget, which represents an overhead of 18% of our operating budget. That is well within the ministry guideline of 24%.

The Secretary Treasurer then reviewed the operating reserves, which are much improved over the preliminary budget. Originally estimated at only \$500,000 after balancing the 2017/18 budget, the amended budget shows a reserve subtotal of just over \$1.9 million for future years, or 3% of total operating expenses, the level recommended by Ernst & Young. As a result, we are able to hold a fiscal prudence contingency fund of \$1 million, something we did not think would be possible in the preliminary budget. There is still \$250,000 earmarked for the WVSS track project, which will remain as long as the project is active. The earliest it would be drawn is 2018. As of July 1, 2017, we will be left with \$700,000 over and above the contingency and track fund, which will cover any structural deficit in the 2017/18 budget.

The Secretary Treasurer concluded by saying that we are in good shape for one more year, something that was not anticipated last spring. Much of that is a result of being careful, rather than due to factors beyond our control. Changes in facilities operations have been particularly beneficial.

RECOMMENDATION: That the 2016/17 amended budget and associated bylaw be forwarded to the Board for approval and submission to the ministry.

8. **Adjourn**

9:25 a.m.

Julia Leiterman, Secretary Treasurer