

Henderson Avenue Public School Council

Minutes of meeting on November 28, 2013

Present: Linda Deschenes, Tarun Dewan, Dorothy Leonard, Sonia Kadela, Lisa Korinek, James Makaruk, Lily Li Oon, Julie Ponikvar, Annette Poteck, Genevieve Seabrook, Craig Franklin, Azi Sanai, Namdar Saniei, Laura Smith, Larry Joffee, Sylvia Kunde

Special Guest Trustee Susan Geller

Absent: Suzanne Craven, Suzy Bazzana

7:00 pm Meeting called to Order

Brief roundtable introductions of all

1. Meeting Minutes. Motion to approve minutes of Council Meeting, October 17th, 2013 made until Tarun Dewan requested issue clarification around Council approved financial contribution to technology cost sharing noted at \$7,500. As the Board match under this program is only \$5000 rather than \$7500, it was suggested that minutes should be amended accordingly.

Council voted to amend Oct. 17th minutes to properly reflect the amount of \$5000 for the Technology cost sharing program along with the intention to release an additional \$2500 in funds for related technology purchases of mini iPads. Sonia Kadela noted that the pricing for this latter technology had increased and rather than being able to purchase 20 mini iPads, this now would be closer to only 10. A specific number of iPads capable of being purchased with available funds would be identified by Sonia after additional review of Board figures. A smartboard has already been requested.

*Note: Minute approval postponed to end of meeting when other financial details were confirmed. ** Given timing considerations, minutes were not formally approved and will require a motion at next meeting.*

2. Empty Council Position

Given the move of Council member Jill Fisher, an open voting seat on Council was available. In perusing the constitution, no "secondary" runner up was identified during the election process in September. However as Namdar Saniei had expressed an interest during the process and submitted a nomination before graciously stepping aside, he was now asked to fill the empty position and agreed to do so. Thank you, Namdar.

Sylvia Kunde will take minutes and find an alternative scribe when unable to make meetings.

Jill Fisher also managed the QSP drive which for this year will be kindly completed by Suzy Bazzana. The chair requested that interested parties for next year's drive please

step forward to train given the early start to this important fundraiser in the school year. No one accepted the role and mention was made that the position could also go to an outside parent member. It is an easy task for a few short weeks requiring in school marketing, hype and assembly kick off.

3. Treasurer's Report (Tarun Dewan)

Budget and expense summary was presented with all updated figures available. Technically \$3,200 were available for additional expenditures. Tarun noted that the QSP Drive figures were not finalized (usually occurs in March) but based on previous year's the above noted figure is reflective.

Motions: Tarun moved to carry-over \$1000 for next year's Council to facilitate September kick-off events like "Meet the Teacher". This is less than previous years but deemed to be sufficient. Seconded by Sylvia Kunde. All in favour, none opposed, motion passed. Tarun moved to accept treasurer's report as presented. Seconded by Sylvia Kunde. All in favour, none opposed, motion passed.

4. Principal's Report (Sonia Kadela)

- a) AussieX update. Event created positive energy in the school. Kids enjoyed the program. Teachers were trained in a workshop to use activities in gym. Manuals and equipment like Footies and netballs were purchased to facilitate non-competitive play. Aussie X to re-visit in spring to run a school wide activity.
- b) Line Painting: Completed. Kids in primary and junior are especially enjoying basketball and foursquare. Teachers received manuals to help facilitate play.
- c) Typhoon Haiyan: Several events held to help support people affected. This relates to the Board mandate of instilling community awareness and engagement in our children. Students have been involved in "Toonie Tuesday" organized by Blue House and a Bake sale to help raise funds. A total of \$600 was achieved and will be forwarded via the "Helping Hands" initiative of the Board. Congratulations to all!
- d) Food Drive: Will be organized to help those in the community during the holidays.
- e) House Assembly: House assembly scheduled for Nov. 29. Teachers have been brainstorming activities to re-engage students and kindergarten kids are included in the program. Team-building will be a first event and ultimately when colour house T-shirts arrive, help to ramp up the house challenges and create an identity across grades.
- f) Holiday concert: Scheduled for December 18th and will be for JK- Grade 5 students.
- g) Interview Night: positive feedback received from teachers and parents alike. Settlement workers were in the school to help facilitate conversation for Mandarin and Farsi speakers in the process. This was well received. Sonia has agreed to host a Korean-speaking event by the settlement workers for all interested parties across the area related to the topic of homework on Dec. 12.
- h) Quest: Board sending representatives to Finland to study / understand successful high performance schools. Some highlights learned include a focus on play-based learning, no standardized testing, a focus on early intervention

and safety and sense of wellbeing as priorities. A board mandate is inclusion and it is looking at best practices in Finland to understand what can be implemented here to foster student resilience and success.

(Susan Geller arrived and was greeted)

- i) Lice Check: Nurse visited school today. Cost \$280 for this session and again in the spring.
- j) Grade 7/8 "Grad" trip: Several options identified that are being researched by Sonia currently. Decision to proceed with separate trips for each grade and to remain local. The 7's will likely attend an outdoor education center of the Board like "Lake St. George" (possibly overnight) to foster leadership skills. The grade 8 trip to be organized through Temple & Temple to either Niagara Falls or Kingston. Proximity to home for safety / emergency reasons as well as financial considerations and sleeping arrangement were cited as rationale for not pursuing trips to either Ottawa or Quebec City. Plans for a letter to parents outlining all associated costs of field trip, grad dinner/dance and photo was pending. Extensive discussion followed as some Council members felt that the 7/8 joint trip was a school highlight, providing important growth opportunities for independence and learning that was not easily duplicated in school setting. Request made to reconsider options in light of (albeit informal) parent community feedback to date and willingness by Council to consider funding support if necessary. Agreement by Sonia to survey the entire school community on extent and location preferences of overnight trips.
- k) Downhill Ski Trip: Decision that no school ski trip for intermediate and seniors was planned for this year. Safety cited as an issue given potential lack of teacher to student ratio and the need to follow students on the ski hill. Lack of experienced skiing teachers identified and that Henderson was not deemed a skiing community. Adequate supervision is mandatory and responsibility for physical security of all students remains with Sonia. Extensive discussion identified Council members were strongly in favour of continuing this activity to engage students and provide the learning opportunity to newcomers/beginners. Again given (albeit informal) parent community feedback to date there is a feeling such a trip would be welcomed. Inquiries as to the extent and specifics of support required (from parent volunteers) for a ski program was tabled. Request made to reconsider decision (perhaps in favour of cross-country skiing as an option) was proposed. Sonia to consider and report back. Sonia suggested snowshoeing potential at the back of the school or parents to take children downhill skiing independently.

5. Cost of Volunteer Check

Given the Board mandate to have all volunteers interacting with students at Henderson to undergo a police check/vulnerable sector screening there was a proposal to fund these checks with Council funds. (Assumption of \$20 per check x on average, 5 volunteers per classroom (16) would mean \$1600 total).

Discussion centered around whether this would be an appropriate expenditure for Council as some saw this as a Board responsibility. Request to Susan Geller to advise the Board accordingly. Disenfranchisement of volunteers was mentioned and the potential to only fund those volunteers participating frequently. Options of having a "funding window" was also raised after which volunteers would need to proceed independently. As volunteers have historically been plentiful at Henderson, the check may not be seen as a deterrent although it would have to be applied for early. Special mention was made to include this requirement and provide contact information in either the June newsletters sent home to parents or the September information package to ensure compliance.

Vote with proxies in absentia were 6 approvals to 5 nays and 1 absent. The **motion** passed and up to \$1600 will be allocated towards this purpose. No action around the possibility of exceeding this amount was determined. The issue of monitoring and managing the checks was identified although Council members assumed that this was a school function. The issue is to be reviewed by Sonia as to process and an update will follow.

6. Proposals (Sylvia Kunde)

- a) Stargazing Event Proposal with local amateur astronomer Chris Vaughan who holds a police check.

Two dates were identified: April 23 & 30th. Both would mean a 9pm start, deemed by Council as too late for primary children on a school night. An alternative of Mar 5th with 7 pm start was discussed given presence of celestial objects but our contact was unavailable. Decision to proceed by Council if Sonia and Sylvia are able to find a mutually acceptable alternative date for this free community event. **Motion** to fund \$100 to our contact as an appreciation fee towards his "equipment fund" was passed as all were in favour.

- b) Funding Proposal for Pinneys/Jerseys. During the fall cross country meets, it was noticed that students had no homogenous look and were difficult to locate in the crowd. Proposal to purchase pinneys for students in varying sizes with Henderson logo to help identify students and create a sense of identity. They would be exchanged and rotated as required. These could be used at Track and Field as well as other team sports. Cost per Suzy Bazzana ranges from \$15-21 per shirt depending on colour, reversibility, graphic, design and volume purchases.

Discussion focused on requirements and existence of other "house colour" T Shirts. Agreement that it would be optimal to spend funding on a Jersey rather than interim pinneys which would also help with team sports like basketball and volleyball. Agreement to get additional pricing on jerseys via Suzy Bazzana to determine if this is feasible. Sylvia to investigate and report back.

- c) International Night Proposal

Reviewed proposal to host a community evening highlighting cultural aspects to showcase our diversity and gain appreciation for other cultures via music, art or drama performance..

Generally a brief, positive discussion as to this non fundraising event, the likely turn out and how to motivate students and parents to participate. Issue of approaching kids who are involved in extra-curricular activities and ask about

willingness to perform. Sonia indicated that teacher involvement was unlikely (as part of existing music or art curriculum focus). Suggestion to investigate success at other regional schools like York Hill who have hosted similar events to determine feedback / impact. Further option is to apply for "Reaching out to Parents Grant." to help fund event if Council elects to proceed Sylvia to review via Sonia's contacts and report back.

7. Other Outdoor Improvement Project \$1209 (Lisa Korinek)

Proposals to complement the outdoor area improvements by the Liberty Development projects generated by members of Council was previously distributed and include:

- Putting in a permanent, creative sundial (teachable opportunities for Henderson students). This requires a parent volunteer group to understand the physics and map the structure properly. Location proposed in Junior area to optimize sun exposure.
- Creating an amphitheatre. Suggestion of the incorporation of natural materials and staging area that could be used at recess for student plays/performances. Reiteration that a bandshell proposal will likely receive approval from Markham Council and that this option might be duplicative.
- Building a gazebo to provide shade.

Clearly the costs for these exceed the current financial mandate but the \$1200 are to provide the start for further investigation. Lisa requested that an outdoor improvement committee be set up with additional members and James and Namdar volunteered to join the committee. Council did not have time to vote on specific preferences but wants to ensure that the kindergarten area is included as part of the outdoor improvement plan

8. Susan Geller (Trustee)

Susan identified her "brokerage" role between the Board and the School administration and that she now functioned across both Markham and Vaughan townlines. She approves board policies and budgets, hires the Director of Education and mediates / helps to resolve any issues experienced by parents relating to the school. She reiterated her support for specific projects and willingness to present concerns to the Board in regards to area issues related to parking. Susan further confirmed her open door policy and cited good communication as the key to success. She may be reached at 905-763-8682 or susan.geller@yrdsb.edu.on.ca

9. Parking Traffic Update (Laura Smith and Larry Joffe)

Presentation as to the preliminary results of the regional traffic study undertaken by "Genevar" for the area around Henderson. Given increased density from development projects by Liberty on the Markham side and others on the Vaughan side, traffic will be directed through present residential areas to form arterial side routes. A committee of interested parties (including GARA) exists to represent local interests. Bottom line no significant alternatives were presented by Genevar with the exception of some minor traffic calming initiatives to support the expected increased traffic. Impact to Henderson school was identified as mayhem on Henderson Ave as commuters attempt to access

Steeles which impacts safety of our students. Traffic lights at Henderson and Doncaster Ave. a possibility. Further study and support required. Request for Susan Geller to take community concerns to the Board to help increase awareness. Laura, Larry and Tarun to continue their facilitation efforts. Need for increased parking in either existing school lot or off Henderson a noted consideration given the expected increase in community visitors to the park once, skating rink, bandshell and related centers are approved and built.

10. Council Group Photo targeted for next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:40 pm

Topics for future review aside from above

- Grad & Yearbook Committee members
- Fundraising Plan and SIP Wish List
- Are we meeting school council mandate?
- Update Constitution
- Update school dress code
- Speaker series

Future 2014 Meetings

- Wed. Jan.8th
- Wed. Feb 5th
- Thurs. April 10th
- Thurs June 5th
- Thurs. May 8th