

PARK WEST SCHOOL SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING SUMMARY

Date: May 7, 2020

Time: 7:00 P.M.

In Attendance

Students: Grade 9 Rep

Parents: Karen Saweczko (chair), Sheetal Ajay, Jeff Rogers

School Staff: Ms. Bennett, Ms. MacIntyre, Ms. Petrie

Community Members: Janet Lee, Glenn Anderson

School Administration: Mr. Carter, Ms. Olsen, Mr. Melanson

Regrets: Grade 8 Representative, Grade 7 Representative, Waseema Nazim

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Principal Update
3. Correspondence
4. Guest: Andy MacNeil, HRCE

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1. Call to Order

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:06 P.M.

2. Reports

2.1 Principal

- School has been closed since March 13, 2020
- Teachers and support staff are working from home while they put efforts into engaging with students. They are getting a varied response from highly engaged to some they have not heard from.
- Teachers have connected with many families and are providing at home learning opportunities. Given the varied home circumstances of students, completing the at home learning is optional, it is not an obligation.
- School administration is preparing for September, though there is no indication as to what the new school year will yet bring.
- Parents are encouraged to check the Park West School website for updates as well as websites for HRCE and EECD.

3. Correspondence

- As background, the Chair advised that the new school for the Clayton Park/Fairview area had been announced 2 years ago with no further updates. The SAC submitted written requests to the Minister of EECD and HRCE in February 2020, requesting that Park West be considered for a capital project to install modular classrooms. The Minister's office did respond advising HRCE was the appropriate decision maker for these types of requests, but they are unaware of any plans to provide any further expansion of capacity, given the current facilities meet the needs of the student population. It was also disclosed that they are in meetings with HRM, as recently as April 8, 2020, as they review development agreements for specific areas to identify possible locations for the new school.
- A Freedom of Information Request was submitted by the SAC to EECD for any documents related to the addition of the modular classrooms as Duc Danville. The organization has since advised it will require additional time to comply with the request due to the COVID-19 situation.

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- A Freedom of Information Request was submitted by the SAC to the HRCE for any documents related to the addition of the modular classrooms as Duc Danville. The response provided heavily redacted information that was of little value.

4. Guest: Andy MacNeil, HRCE

Mr. MacNeil was invited to speak to the SAC to share any new information that may be available on the new school to be built in the Clayton Park/Fairview area and the request for the modular classroom at PWS.

- There has been significant discussion on the Halifax West family of schools. All schools in this area are at capacity, over capacity, or very close to being at capacity.
- Park West School's current enrollment is at 815, which is fairly typical for PWS.
- The HRCE uses Barager as the system to predict and monitor student population across the region. It has been pretty accurate in its predictions as shown by its current prediction of 817 for PWS against the actual of 815 students for this time of year.
- The circumstances caused by COVID-19 makes predicting what will occur in the coming school year nearly impossible. There are many people in the area who have study permits, work permits, etc. and there is no way to gauge the impact on how/if their children will be returning to schools this September.
- Pre-primary will be an offsite leased space, location yet to be announced.
- The SAC and parents have done all of the right things by advocating for PWS, contacting the Superintendent, sending letters and by considering options for the school and students.
- Power School provides almost real time data to HRCE Analysts who can see the current student population at all schools.
- Typical options for over-crowded schools include boundary changes, grade reconfiguration, addition of portables and split shifts.
- The Capital Planning Committee determines the best solution for a school.
- Usually 1-2 portables is enough for a school, but Clayton Park and Bedford areas are well beyond this, which is creating significant challenges.
- PWS student numbers currently have all classrooms under the hard cap, though it is unknown whether they will stay this way in future years.

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- The solution today, short term, is status quo and no additional portable will be provided. Modular classrooms will also not be considered unless there is a significant change to the current situation.
- The longer-term solution is the addition of the new school. This school will have a grade configuration of Pre-primary to grade 8 (PP-8) with an expected compliment of 600-800 students.
- The Principal for the new school is being hired this Monday, 2 years ahead of the planned opening of the school. The new Principal will retain their responsibilities at their existing school for 1 year and also participate in the design process for the new school.
- While the locations for the PP-8 and 9-12 schools are known for the Larry Uteck area, the location for the new Clayton Park/Fairview PP-8 school is not yet available.
- The plan is to convert Halifax West to grades 9-12 once the new schools are constructed. It is expected HWHS will have the space for the change once all 3 new schools have been opened.
- The boundary for the Halifax West family of schools is not expected to change.

Discussion:

- Question: relative to the way forward, some parents are concerned about the interim plan being status quo until 2023.
 - Confirmed that there are no plans to complete any further expansions, portable or permanent, without a significant change in the school's circumstances.
- Question: does the ownership (i.e. Scotia Learning vs. EECD) affect what improvements can be made to the school?
 - No, ownership is not a factor, decisions on improvements are made based on the school's circumstances.
- Question: considering COVID-19, when will the community be made aware of the contingency plans for the 2020-21 school year?
 - EECD has struck a committee to meet regularly for the remainder of the school year to plan for the upcoming school year.
 - Parents can expect decisions and plans will be made in a manner that is best for students and families.



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Adjourned: 7:54 PM

Next Meeting: To be determined.