

## SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 20, 2020

A special meeting of the Limestone District School Board was held in the Barry O'Connor Board Room at the Limestone Education Centre, 220 Portsmouth Avenue, Kingston, Ontario, on Wednesday, August 20, 2020, at 6:00 p.m.

### PUBLIC MEETING

#### Roll Call:

#### Administrative Staff Present:

Trustees:	Staff:
J. Brown	M. Babcock, Superintendent of Education
G. Elliott	K. Burra, Director of Education
L. French (Vice-Chair)	J. Douglas, Communications Officer
T. Gingrich (regrets)	S. Gillam, Associate Superintendent, Safe and Caring Schools
B. Godkin	S. Hedderson, Associate Superintendent
R. Hutcheon	A. Labrie, Superintendent of Education and Human Resources
K. McGregor	A. McDonnell, Superintendent of Education
J. Morning	S. Sartor, Associate Superintendent, School Effectiveness and Assessment
S. Ruttan (Chair)	J. Silver, Superintendent of Education
A. Putnam (Student Trustee)	K. Smith, Communications Officer
N. Quadir (Student Trustee)	C. Young, Superintendent of Business Services
Q. Travis (Student Trustee)	
Guests:	Recorder:
None at this time	W. Moore, Executive Assistant to the Director and Trustee Liaison

Chair Ruttan stated:

“Good evening Trustees, Senior Staff, and the viewing public. Welcome to a special meeting of the Limestone District School Board of Trustees.

I am Suzanne Ruttan, Chair of the Board, and Trustee for South Frontenac.

Tonight's meeting provides updates on various components of the Board's school re-entry plan to reflect additional directives received from the government recently, including financial updates based on new funding, staggered entry, health and safety, communications, the new PPM on Remote Learning, and recent correspondence.'

Chair Ruttan read the Acknowledgement of Territory:

"The Limestone District School Board is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. We acknowledge their enduring presence on this land, as well as the presence of Métis, Inuit and other First Nations from across Turtle Island. We honour their cultures and celebrate their commitment to this land."

Chair Ruttan stated:

"Before I ask for adoption of the agenda, I would like to briefly explain to the viewing audience that we are live from the main board room at the Education Centre. Some Trustees and Senior Staff are joining the meeting remotely, while the majority are present here around the horseshoe.

We are using a directional camera, so as Trustees speak the camera will track to them. Viewers will experience a delay in the video as this happens.

Trustees Brown, Godkin and Morning join us virtually; all other Trustees are present here in this room; I have regrets from Trustee Gingrich. All other Trustees are present. Senior Staff present in the room are Superintendent Young, Superintendent Babcock, Superintendent Silver, the Director of Education and our communication staff. In an adjacent room we have Superintendent McDonnell, Associate Superintendents Sartor and Hedderson. Joining remotely: Superintendent Labrie and Associate Superintendent Gillam."

## **1. Adoption of Agenda**

MOVED BY: Trustee McGregor, seconded by Trustee Elliott that the agenda be approved. Carried.

## 2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Trustee Elliott declared a conflict as his wife is an employee of the Board and a member of ETFO. Trustee Godkin declared a conflict as his daughter is an occasional teacher with two other public boards.

## 3. Chair's Update

Chair Ruttan indicated she did not have an update and turned the meeting over to Director Burra.

## 4. Director's Update

Director Burra stated:

“Good evening Trustees and the public gallery joining us remotely through our live feed. As I noted at last Wednesday’s Special Meeting of the Board, everyone in the room is physically distanced to meet the expectations established by the Ministry of Education Guidance document and local public health. We are continuing to hone our live feed to try to improve the experiences of remote viewers. I would like to acknowledge the staff who have helped ensure we are able to move forward with this meeting set-up this evening.

I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Alison McDonnell on her promotion to Superintendent of Education. I would also like to congratulate and welcome Steve Hedderson as a member of Senior Staff as an Associate Superintendent. Given our current focus on school re-entry, we are still in the process of finalizing portfolios and responsibilities. This information will be communicated when it is complete.

Since our meeting last week, we have received further updates from the Ministry that we have incorporated into our planning. Evolving information related to staggered entry is one example. We continue to work closely with public health in preparation for start up. Given the recency of announcements and the evolving information we have received, we continue to adjust our planning. This also understandably creates some confusion among families and in the community. We are actively engaging with our school administrators to prepare for opening in a couple of weeks. Central and school-based communication of up-to-date and accurate information will continue to be a focus of attention to ensure families and

staff are kept informed.

As Trustees know, our survey asking families if they are opting out of returning to the classroom has closed. This information is critical for us to plan for the start of the year, and to ensure we have staff in place to support remote learners. While the data needs to be further assessed, we have under 10% of families indicating they are opting out of returning to the classroom at this point. This represents about 2,000 students in Limestone (1,454 elementary students and 545 secondary/continuing education students). This information is vital for us to operationalize our staffing in schools and for remote learners. Just a few days ago, we also received an updated Policy/Program Memorandum (164) related to remote learning which outlines what remote learning will look like for students and educators. I would note that families with elementary children will have another opportunity to determine their preferred model of learning in just a few weeks.

In closing, Madame Chair, as we continue to receive new information and guidance, we will adapt and incorporate new information into our planning, and we will do our utmost to be responsive to the communities we serve during this challenging time. Health, safety, and wellness for students and staff continues to be the most important priority as we move forward. It is critical we remember that Limestone schools are a direct reflection of the communities we serve. When it comes to COVID-19, the health of our community is the best defence, and indicator, for the health of our schools. As a community we must remain vigilant in following the guidance of public health. With that Madame Chair, that concludes my opening comments and with your permission, we will start with the Re-entry Plan Update. Thank you.”

## **5. Reports for Information**

### **5.1 School Re-entry Plan Update**

Director Burra stated that the Ministry of Education announced on August 14, 2020 that school boards were permitted to adopt a staggered start to the first week of the school year which would contribute to students learning new routines, and for new health and safety practices to be reinforced. This announcement was adjusted in a Ministry memo received two days ago allowing for a staggered start up to the first two weeks of school, if needed. School boards do not need to seek any adjustment to previously approved school calendars if they stagger entry for students.

As a reminder, Limestone is starting prior to the Labour Day weekend, which is a little bit different than some other school boards in other parts of the province. As a result, we are currently working with our school Administrators looking at what those re-entry staggered plans will look like.

Staggered entry will occur from September 3 to September 10, 2020, with full school attendance by September 11, 2020. Elementary and secondary schools will organize staggered entry based on their school population and classroom sizes, with larger schools requiring more days for student entry than smaller schools may require. School administrators will develop staggered entry plans based on the context and needs of their school. Because staggered entry plans will vary based on school context, schools will communicate their staggered entry plan to parents directly using our communicate system, beginning the week of August 24, 2020.

Director Burra advised that also in the update, Trustees will see some information very briefly summarizing the new PPM 164, which goes over the expectations for students and families in terms of what they can expect, as well as the expectations for educators as far as the amount of synchronous learning that is to be done to help support those learners, and families who opted for the remote learning model.

Director Burra directed Trustees to the update as it relates to communications and the work that Limestone is doing with a range of different community partners including Queen's University, the hospital and public health. He indicated that last week the new Family Reference Guide was launched, and there were a couple of different videos and other resources that we have shared publicly with families, as the report indicates. As of yesterday, the video *School Reopening: What to Expect when Students Return to School*, had more than 7,500 views. Director Burra noted that our FAQs now number above 70 on the website. We are trying to be as responsive as possible as we are getting questions. On that note, Director Burra indicated that as we are trying to be responsive and efficient, there are occasions when we are thinking about the responses to some of these questions, that they are evolving due to new ministry announcements, or there needs to be some more time potentially put into those responses. Particularly, if it relates to what needs to be happening in schools after school has actually started. The focus for Senior Staff right now is almost exclusively on re-entry. We are very focused on the next couple of weeks as opposed to some of those questions that may perhaps require a little more time to consider because they are actually more than a month away at this point in time.

Director Burra indicated that there was an update as it relates to health and safety. He noted however that we are still waiting for the delivery of the Outbreak Protocol from the province, that will obviously impact some of the communication protocols locally as it relates to safety and containment of a potential outbreak locally. As a result, we continue to need to be nimble in being flexible to new information as it continues to come out.

That concluded the report, and Senior Staff addressed Trustee questions.

A motion was brought forward.

MOTION: That all students in the Limestone District School Board (K-12) wear masks inside schools and on buses, allowing for appropriate medical exemptions.

Moved by Trustee Elliott, seconded by Trustee Quadir.

Chair Ruttan indicated that a substantial motion must be sent in advance, so that staff and Trustees can understand what they are, before Trustees make a significant decision. She felt this is a very substantial motion because it touches everybody in our Board and has not had consultation with our health professionals. She asked Trustee Elliott to defer the motion to the next Education, Policy and Education Committee meeting, next week.

Trustee Elliott expressed his concern, as he felt the motion was germane to the topic at hand and felt that procedurally Trustees should give themselves the ability to make choices quickly if they needed to. Chair Ruttan stated there was no question that this motion is relevant to the topic, however, it also has an enormous impact on the report at hand. Chair Ruttan indicated she is sensitive to staff being able to provide the accurate information on this, around logistics, and also around financial implications, and we have not given them a chance at all, on this. She once again, asked the mover and seconder to defer the motion to the EPOC meeting, scheduled for August 26, 2020, to give staff a chance to look into this, and then when it goes to discussion, Trustees would have a full picture.

The motion was deferred.

## **6. Reports Requiring Decision**

### **6.1 Financial Update Related to Investments to Support School Reopening in Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak.**

Superintendent Young advised that since the Board met last week there have been some

more details related to funding announcements. The Remote Learning funding amount is \$199,525 is for principal and school administration to ensure appropriate leadership. There is also additional funding for teacher staffing in the amount of \$182,961, which is an allocation of two teachers in Limestone. Superintendent Young indicated that this amount was already announced as part of a \$30 million sector investment that was originally to be accessed by an application process. It has recently been changed to a board by board allocation due to time constraints. The \$182,961 is significantly less than what we had initially expected, being a 1% Board, which was \$300,000. In that announcement as well, was \$50 million for the sector for ventilation in classrooms with details to be released at a later date. Typically, our share of this would be approximately \$500,000.

Superintendent Young provided a breakdown of the total (\$9.7 million) mid-year estimates of accumulated surplus (2019-2020 ending) available for use. He stated that it is important to identify that with the exception of the unallocated surplus, if the Board were to spend any of the other surplus dollars beyond the unallocated surplus, the Board will be faced with an operational deficit in future years as the allocated surplus dollars are encumbered.

Superintendent Young indicated that the Ministry of Education will approve the use of up to 1% of our operating revenues from accumulated surplus and with special approval up to 2% on a one-time only basis. The funds available to us at this time, without encumbering the Board with significant future operational deficits, is the Unallocated Surplus of \$2,646,235. This amount marginally exceeds our 1% of our current operating revenues which is \$2,465,397.55.

Superintendent Young also noted that there have been informal suggestions that the Board reorganize and reduce class sizes to 15:1. If we were to reduce the average class size from its current number to 15:1 the requirement for additional teaching staff would be \$49,500,000, with 374 classroom teachers required at the elementary level, and 121 classroom teachers at the secondary level. Superintendent Young stated that the cost of the teaching staff alone makes this unachievable before we even consider the practical reality of Limestone's ability to hire that many staff in such a short time period. Limestone does not have enough elementary occasional teachers in their supply pool to cover the amount of hires that would be required.

Superintendent Young also stated that space would be required for these classes which does not exist in our current facilities and would therefore require additional accommodation expenses assuming the space in other community buildings were available.

Superintendent Young said additional costs would also include the requirement for additional caretakers and supplies for cleaning, added transportation costs, and additional administration expenses. Therefore, based on this analysis, it is very clear that the notion of reducing class size while maintaining daily attendance for all students is not remotely possible. The only way for us to reduce the number of students in classes would be for us to utilize an 'adaptive model' where approximately 50% of students attend each day. Consequently, students would only attend on average 2.5 days per week. Based on the Ministry Guidance document, as a non-designated board, we have been directed to have all students (K-12) attend 5 days per week in a conventional model.

That concluded the report and Chair Ruttan called upon Trustees for questions. Superintendent Young responded to these questions.

MOTION: That the Limestone District School Board approve amending the budget to use their Accumulated Surplus of up to 1% of operating revenues to a value of \$2,465,397 to address the increasing and evolving Covid-19 related expenses in the 2020-2021 budget year.

MOVED BY: Trustee Godkin and seconded by Trustee French. Carried.

Trustee Godkin stated that he wanted to bring forward a motion that the Chair write a letter to the Ministry requesting an exemption that would allow us the option of changing to an adaptive model, under circumstances that would arise, similar to designated boards.

In an effort to clarify Trustee Godkin's request, Director Burra stated that in the province of Ontario, the direction has been that in all elementary schools, students are to go back, and it is a conventional model. Then those designated boards, at the secondary level, it is an adaptive model, in some of the larger urban areas, which means that those students would essentially attend 50% or half time per week. Director Burra questioned if Trustee Godkin was asking that a letter be written asking to move to be a designated Board or asking for permission to potentially adjust in the event of an outbreak, or if there was a situation that emerged? Trustee Godkin stated he is looking for the option of flexibility from the Ministry. Superintendent Silver questioned if Trustee Godkin was looking for us to go to an adaptive model, as opposed to where we are starting, or was he looking for us to have that flexibility to start with? Superintendent Silver stated that our relationship with the health unit is such that we will have flexibility if there are positive cases or outbreaks. They absolutely will be telling us what to do and we will follow their direction. The communication we have had



with public health has been so strong and positive. It was further noted that the Ministry has not released the Outbreak Protocol, and there will be answers in that document.

Trustee Godkin withdrew his request to put forward a motion.

Chair Ruttan thanked Trustee Godkin and confirmed, for the record, that the adaptive model is for secondary only in designated boards, so this would have no bearing on elementary, based on the Ministry's Guidance document.

## **7. Notice of Motion**

None at this time.

## **8. Internal Reports and Other Communications**

None at this time.

## **9. External Reports and Other Communications**

### **9.1 Letter to the Limestone District School Board Trustees, from Crystal Bevens-Leblanc, Chair, Parent Involvement Committee.**

Trustee Morning confirmed she was present by phone, as she had experienced connectivity issues. Chair Ruttan stated that the correspondence in External Reports and Other Communications is the letter from the LDSB Parent Involvement Committee. Chair Ruttan indicated she has again received no motions around this. She noted that there were discussions at the last meeting and there had been some procedural challenges. Chair Ruttan indicated that, she had not received a motion. She asked Trustees if anyone wanted to address the letter, or just receive it in our package for information.

Trustee Morning brought forth the following motion:

MOTION: That the Limestone District School Board put the Ministry on notice through a letter and that Trustee Morning and Elliott draft a letter for Trustees to consider.

MOVED BY: Trustee Morning, seconded by Trustee Elliott.

Trustee French raised a point of order. Similar to last week, she indicated this is a substantive motion that has not been sent to Trustees ahead of time. She stated that the PIC letter should simply be acknowledged as correspondence. It is key input from our parent group, but Trustee French stated she was not prepared to support a motion from a procedural perspective and added that she was not even sure what the motion is.

Chair Ruttan reminded Trustees about the substantial nature of motions from the floor. Chair Ruttan indicated that she understands Trustee Morning is speaking to the philosophy of the letter, and she indicated she is not clear about the motion either. As a reminder, Chair Ruttan did send out a long email to Trustees after the August 12, 2020 meeting, outlining Board policies and talking about the need to receive motions in advance.

Chair Ruttan asked Trustee Morning if she would be agreeable to move the motion to Committee, and this could be dealt with at the Education, Policy and Education Committee, next week on August 26, 2020. Trustees Morning and Elliott concurred.

Roll call vote to defer the motion on the floor to Committee.

The non-binding recorded vote:

YEAS: Trustee Brown, Trustee Elliott, Trustee Hutcheon, Trustee McGregor,  
Trustee Morning, Trustee Ruttan (6)  
NAYS: Trustee French, Trustee Quadir, Trustee Traviss (3)  
ABSTAIN: Trustee Godkin (1)  
ABSENT: Trustee Gingrich, Trustee Putnam (2)

The binding recorded vote was as follows:

YEAS: Trustee Brown, Trustee Elliott, Trustee Hutcheon, Trustee McGregor,  
Trustee Morning, Trustee Ruttan (6)  
NAYS: Trustee French (1)  
ABSTAIN: Trustee Godkin (1)  
ABSENT: Trustee Gingrich (1)

The motion carried.

Chair Ruttan thanked Trustee Morning and Trustee Elliott and she stated that she looks forward to seeing the motion in advance.

## 10. Other Special Meetings/Events

None at this time.

## 17. Adjournment

MOVED BY: Trustee McGregor, seconded by Trustee Elliott, that the meeting adjourn. Carried

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:07 p.m.