



Committee of
School Councils

MEETING MINUTES

Elk Island Public Schools, virtual meeting

March 3, 2021 | 6:30 p.m.

In Attendance

SCHOOL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

Chair: Lesley Bowman, Pine Street Elementary

Vice-Chair: Devon Marshall, SCA Elementary

Secretary: Brian Vick, Brentwood Elementary

Jacque Surgenor, Westboro Elementary &
Salisbury Composite High School
Michelle Uytterhagen, Fultonvale Elementary
Junior High
Jessica Winship, Glen Allan Elementary

SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Ken Allen, A.L. Horton Elementary
Jackie Anderson, Ardrossan Elementary & Ardrossan
Junior Senior High
Aileen Bozic, SCA Secondary
April Childs, Lakeland Ridge
Jen Fraser, Salisbury Composite High
Dawn Ferguson, Win Ferguson Elementary
Cara Kern, Pine Street Elementary
Cassandra Levitt, Fort Saskatchewan Christian
Theresa MacKenzie, Westboro Elementary
Robyn Michaelchuk, Fort Saskatchewan Elementary
Melissa Pressé, Davidson Creek Elementary
Kimberly Scott, Westboro Elementary
Krista Scott, Bev Facey Community High, Fultonvale
Elementary Junior High & SCA Secondary
Amanda Shand, École Parc Élémentaire

ELK ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Trina Boymook, Chair
Colleen Holowaychuk, Vice-Chair
Randy Footz, Trustee
Skip Gordon, Trustee
Annette Hubick, Trustee
Don Irwin, Trustee
Jim Seutter, Trustee

ELK ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mark Liguori, Superintendent
Sandra Stoddard, Associate Superintendent
Deneen Ziekle, ATA Local No. 28 President
Corrie Fletcher, Communications

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

COSC Chair Bowman called for additions or deletions to the agenda for March 3, 2021.

MOTION | The agenda be adopted, as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Bowman called for confirmation of the meeting minutes for Feb. 3, 2021.

MOTION | The agenda be adopted, as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED

Board Report

Board Chair Trina Boymook presented the Board report.

HIGHLIGHTS

- At the February 18 Board meeting:
 - The Board of Trustees approved a modification to Lamont County's junior high and senior high attendance boundaries.
 - The Board approved the Three-Year Capital Plan. The No. 1 priority is a replacement school that combines Sherwood Heights Junior High and École Campbelltown. The No. 2 request is a replacement school that combines Rudolph Hennig Junior High and Fort Saskatchewan High.
 - The Board approved sponsoring the registration fees for school council members to take part in the 2021 Albert School Councils' Association (ASCA) Conference and Annual General Meeting on April 23-25. The Board will fund the cost of one registration fee per EIPS school—up to a maximum of 15 registrants.
- On February 19, Chair Boymook and Trustee Jim Seutter met virtually with Nate Glubish, Alberta's Minister of Service and Member of the Legislative Assembly for Strathcona County-Sherwood Park. The meeting focus: The recommendation to combine Sherwood Heights Junior High and École Campbelltown into a new kindergarten to Grade 9 school and how Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) plans to address access space at Salisbury Composite High.
- On February 25, the province released its Budget 2021. Overall, school boards view it as a good-news budget, given the current financial climate and pandemic.
- On February 25, Chair Boymook and Superintendent Mark Liguori took part in a budget debrief with Adriana LaGrange, the Minister of Education. The meeting included school board chairs and superintendents from across the province and offered a high-level overview of the province's education budget for the next school year.
 - The province's education funding commitment is maintained at \$8.2 billion.
 - School boards are held harmless from pandemic-related enrolment challenges.
 - Student transportation funding remains the same.
 - The province will fund 14 new capital projects—expected to be announced in mid-March.
 - The modular program has increased support.
 - The province will shift \$40 million from Plant, Operation and Maintenance to Specialized Learning Supports—PUF; First Nations, Métis and Inuit; English language learners; social economics; geography; and school nutrition.
- The Board expects to receive its funding letter by March 31.
- At the April Board meeting, trustees will approve school allocations for the upcoming year. School Council are encouraged to have a school budget discussion at their next school council meeting. The Board will also set student transportation fees and other administrative fees for 2021-22.

ATA Report

ATA Local No. 28 President Deneen Zielke presented the ATA report.

HIGHLIGHTS

- On February 4-5, the ATA hosted its virtual North Central Teachers' Convention, which included a Partners in Education session with keynote speaker Shelley Moore, a renowned expert on effective practices of inclusion, special education, curriculum and professional learning. Zielke thanked the Board and the Committee of School Council Chair (COSC) for attending.
- On February 6, Zielke attended the ATA Local President's meeting. It's clear from survey data the pandemic has taken a toll on teachers—both mentally and physically. The stress will continue to worsen without a commitment from the province about vaccinating school staff.

- The ATA and teachers are concerned about the province’s new curriculum, specifically the change in focus and credentials of those overseeing it. The extensive changes also have significant budget and time-commitment implications—already in short supply.
- Despite the challenges, educators continue to learn new strategies and technologies to ensure students are both safe and engaged.

For Information

ASCA UPDATE – Krista Scott and Jacquie Surgenor, COSC members and ASCA Board directors

- As expressed, numerous times, the province cut the grant it provides to the Alberta School Councils’ Association (ASCA) by 70 per cent.
- The ASCA board of directors believe public education needs strong school councils.
- ASCA plans to maintain the services it provides, as best that it can.
- ASCA believes strong advocacy, through school councils, is essential.
- ASCA needs alternative funding and recently launched a fundraising campaign, called [Rally for ASCA](#).
 - The goal is to raise \$300,000 by June 15, 2021.
 - There are three ways to contribute: [donate](#); [share a story](#), three to five sentences, about how ASCA or your school council positively impacted student learning or parent engagement; or [produce a video](#) describing an impactful story involving ASCA.
- *REMINDER*: ASCA has a website with excellent resources available to school councils.
- Krista Scott and Jacquie Surgenor encourage all members to look through the webinars ASCA offers.

ASCA REGISTRATION AND PROXY VOTE – Lesley Bowman, COSC Chair

- Lesley Bowman thanked the EIPS Board for sponsoring school councils to attend this year’s ASCA conference and annual general meeting.
- Registration information is provided in the COSC meeting package.
- If you’re registering, the sooner, the better.
- ASCA will send detailed information to those who register about voting on an online platform.
- Also included in the meeting package are forms and details about proxy voting.
- Discuss the ASCA resolutions and how to vote at the next school council meeting.
- If a school council doesn’t have someone attending the annual general meeting, another EIPS school council can complete a proxy vote on the school council’s behalf.
- For more information about proxy voting contact the COSC Chair.

CAREGIVER SERIES UPDATE – Lesley Bowman, COSC Chair

- The March Caregiver Series [schedule](#) is now available.
- Offered through Alberta Health Services, the sessions are informative and the resources valuable.
- School councils are hearing comments about mental health issues—affecting parents and children.
- Bowman encouraged members to review the March Caregiver Series calendar.

SAFFRON CYBER SECOND – Lesley Bowman, COSC Chair

- The March issue of the [Saffron Cyber Second](#) is now available.
- The newsletter offers tips, tools and strategies to help children develop skills for healthy and safe online experiences.
- Consider distributing it in a school council newsletter, the school newsletter or through social media.

New Business

ACCESSING TECHNOLOGY – Mark Liguori, Superintendent, EIPS

- EIPS is starting a conversation about a possible technology fee.
- It takes time to determine what to do about a technology fee, but it's important to start the conversation.
- As schools proceed with new technology, there are associated costs.
- All school boards have struggled with the increasing costs of technology.
- There are two ideas administration brought forward to the Board: bring your own device or introducing a technology fee.
- Costs associated with technology are never-ending, such as software and bandwidth.
- School boards can't absorb these costs under the existing funding guidelines.
- The conversation needs to encompass what a fee could include—software, bandwidth, and even possible depreciation on hardware.
- Another large part of the overall conversation is about equitable technology access—students living in certain rural areas don't have the same overall access to the internet.
- EIPS will receive information about its 2021-22 funding envelop at the end of March. Once known, EIPS is in a better position to start the conversation.
- With the current economic situation in Alberta, the Board wants to make sure families aren't surprised and know a discussion is likely to happen.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Comment: Last year, when EIPS received its budget, it had to discontinue the evergreening fund. The rationale: To push as many dollars as possible to schools. As a result, it's likely the current technology will begin to fail in two or three years.

Question: Can you give us an idea about the purchasing and the decision-making process for technology?

Answer: Schools come to the Division with what they need. The Division then solicits different vendors through the IT department for the best prices and support. EIPS also tries to achieve economy of scale and use the same technology, as much as possible. Schools have a structured process to follow when purchasing technology.

Q: You mentioned bandwidth. Who is your internet provider, as most providers don't limit the amount of bandwidth or number of added devices to a network?

A: We use The Alberta SuperNet, or Axia. School boards are charged for increased bandwidth.

Q: Is there an option to go to another provider, such as Shaw or TELUS?

A: No. We've looked at other options, but we need to have the same internet connectivity throughout the Division. There are still connectivity issues that EIPS needs to address—not only in rural communities but urban areas as well. We're looking at solutions.

Q: If students bring their own devices, how will schools manage those student's personal data plans?

A: Once students log in, they'd draw on the Division's bandwidth.

Q: What are the parameters surrounding this technology conversation. Is this something we are looking at starting in September?

A: If the Board does not have a decision on funding soon, then it's not a fee it will contemplate this year.

C: There are many variables surrounding this technology conversation, and that's why it's important we have it.

Q: The optics of a technology fee could be seen as double-dipping since some school fundraising groups already do it. Do we know how many schools are fundraising for technology?

A: We do have that information. I don't have it on hand, though. Typically, school fundraising is for many things to benefit students. It's not, "do you want a Chromebook or a playground." The draft curriculum will likely roll out digitally, in all subjects, meaning additional demands and unanticipated costs.

Q: School councils have a general understanding about the process for school fees. That said, it would be helpful for school councils to further understand the process surrounding any additional fees.

A: Typically, senior administration brings the Board a series of reports about what fees should encompass. Based on the reports, the Board then directs senior administration—such as, conduct a public consultation. What the Board directs depends on the need and how broadly people are affected. In terms of a potential technology fee, what we don't want is for families to be caught off guard by any conversation about a new fee. That's why trustees raised the discussion with school councils. Ultimately, fees are brought to the Board for consideration in budgeting. Any school fee levied must be used for the stated purpose.

COVID-19 UPDATE – Mark Liguori, Superintendent, EIPS

- Total active COVID-19 cases: 4
 - Three at Bev Facey Community High and one at Sherwood Heights Junior High.
 - There was a variant of concern identified at Bev Facey.
- Total cases reported—since January 1: 15
- Total number schools on Alert Status: 2
 - Bev Facey and Salisbury Composite High
 - Total number of schools on Outbreak Status: 0
- It's not known as to why these cases have occurred.
- The credit for the low numbers goes to the families, staff and students within EIPS.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Question: Has there been any talk of loosening up the rules?

Answer: We are going to keep the current protocols in place at this time. That's because the current protocols work. The Division will loosen restrictions where possible, such as opening libraries.

Q: Even though it's a long way off, do we have any idea of what protocols will be in place for September?

A: The hope is we return to as normal as possible in September. We'll try to resume as many things as possible. At the same time, we'll have whatever protocols in place, as necessary.

Q: Moving forward, how closely are we going to follow Alberta Health Services' recommendations? And, will all students have to write final exams?

A: Everyone's writing final exams. There was variability across some of the senior high schools. In terms of the first question, EIPS will not risk the health of a large number of students to accommodate athletics. We will try to resume normal activities, as best as possible, next year. Right now, all protocols must align with the overall goal of keeping students in school through to the end of June.

COSC Sharing

ASCA RESOLUTIONS 2021 – Lesley Bowman, COSC Chair

- Members discussed ASCA's proposed resolutions for the upcoming annual general meeting.
- The No. 1 resolution members voted to discuss involves adequate funding from the government for technology—Resolution 1 and Resolution 11.
- We have decided to consolidate some resolutions.
- It's important to talk about the advocacy resolutions at COSC and at school council meetings.
- If not attending the ASCA annual general meeting, school councils can exercise their vote by proxy.

QUESTIONS

Question: Although we don't have the details yet, the new draft curriculum will be more heavily related to technology, and this will result in increased costs. Is that correct?

Answer: Last heard, the province is looking at the implementation of digital resources and curriculum. Curriculum changes can be costly—such as textbook revisions. Historically the province hasn't funded curriculum changes. The Division doesn't know what changes will occur.

- The No. 2 resolution voted to discuss is about allocating funds to public education.
- Two groups attending the ASCA annual general meeting are public school groups and charter school groups.

Q: What is the difference between public school and catholic school systems? Can you explain to us the difference?

A: In Alberta, there are three publicly funded systems: the public system, the catholic system and francophone education.

Q: A charter school in Sherwood Park is not an EIPS school, is that correct?

A: Yes, that is correct. Charter schools have their own superintendent, board and are an independent school division.

GENERAL COMMENT:

- The overall discussion focused on differences between charter schools and private schools.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:49 p.m.

Next COSC Meeting

DATE: April 7, 2021

TIME: 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Virtual meeting, link available in April agenda