



Jay Aspin, Chair

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The April 20, 2021 **Public Session Committee of the Whole** of the Near North District School Board was held via video and/or teleconference.

Trustees Present:

Jay Aspin, Chair
John Cochrane, Vice-Chair *
Al Bottomley *
Bill Steer
Donna Breault
Harry Fry
Louise Sargent
Nichole King *

Administrative Staff Present:

Craig Myles, Director of Education
Deb Bartlett, Information/Communication Officer
Gay Smylie, Acting Superintendent
Krista Messenger, Executive Assistant
Lisa Collins, Interim Executive Officer
Melanie Gray, Acting Superintendent
Tim Graves, Superintendent
Wally Easton, Interim Superintendent of Business

** joined the meeting following roll call.*

Other:

Media and community partners

Trustee Regrets:

Rob Learn
Madeline Hall-Paradis, Student Trustee

Administrative Regrets:

None noted.

1.0 Call to Order

Chair Aspin called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

1.1 Land acknowledgement

Chair Aspin read the declaration aloud.

1.2 Attendance

Attendance indicated that five trustees are present for the meeting.

1.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest NIL

2.0 Approval of the Agenda

Motion: B. Steer/ L. Sargent

That the agenda for the Committee of the Whole meeting of April 20, 2021 be approved as presented. - **Carried.**

3.0 In-Camera

At this time, Chair Aspin advised the Committee of the Whole would be moving into a

private session. Members of the public were excused and advised they would be permitted back into the meeting once the Board arose in public session. A brief pause was noted to coordinate the appropriate video conference controls.

Motion: H. Fry/ D. Breault

That the Committee of the Whole move into an in-camera session. **-Carried.**

4.0 Arise and Report

The Committee arose and reported in the public session of Committee of the Whole. A brief pause was noted to coordinate the appropriate video conference controls to permit members of the public to re-enter the virtual meeting.

5.0 Approval of Previous Minutes

5.1 2021 03 16 Committee of the Whole meeting minutes

Board Chair Aspin referred all attendees to the meeting minutes contained in the agenda package.

Motion: D. Breault/ N. King

That the minutes of the Committee of the Whole meeting held on March 16, 2021, be approved. - **Carried**

6.0 Bring Forward Business

The Chair confirmed there was no outstanding business contained in the March 16, 2021, meeting minutes to bring forward.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Audit Committee membership discussion

Chair Aspin invited the Audit Committee Chair, Vice-Chair Cochrane, to speak to this item. Vice-Chair Cochrane advised Trustee Learn has resigned from the Audit Committee, given his busy schedule. To ensure the Audit Committee has appropriate representation, Vice-Chair Cochrane approached Trustee King to fulfill the vacancy left by Trustee Learn, and she graciously accepted.

Board Chair Aspin called for any opposition to consensus regarding the amendments to the Audit Committee's membership composition. With no opposition expressed, consensus is achieved, and this will come forward as an item for decision as part of the Board's regular session.

7.2 Trustee Report: Climate Crisis- Call to Action

Chair Aspin invited Trustee Bottomley to speak to this item. Trustees referred to the brief contained in the agenda package regarding this item. Highlights of Trustee Bottomley's presentation are noted as:

- As an environmental advocate, Trustee Bottomley noted that more than COVID or new school decisions, the most significant issue facing students is climate chaos.

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- There are many sources of information to support these claims, and trustees are encouraged to do their own research.
- Brief overview of recent catastrophic weather events provided. Although there is no immediate solution, one of the keys to slowing these events is a reduction in the reliance on fossil fuels.
- Highlights provided on recent advances in electric vehicles to support NNDSB moving towards the full electrification of its transportation system. Drawbacks offered regarding availability of charging stations in northern Ontario.
- Acknowledgement that climate change is much larger than NNDSB, but individual steps are needed to support collective impact as we approach the tipping point of global temperature warming.
- The threat of world war because of climate change is looming. There are millions of people in great distress, and this will worsen as the strain on resources becomes greater.
- The cost of inaction is far greater than any negative public relations consequences the Board may experience.

Trustee Bottomley implored the Board to declare a climate emergency in pursuit of the substantive action needed. A request was tabled to seek consensus for the Board to pass a resolution, “to declare a climate emergency, and proceed to lobby/petition the provincial and federal governments for monies to help make the school board based on electrical power only”.

Chair Aspin thanked Trustee Bottomley for his presentation and opened the floor for discussion. Highlights of the discussion are noted as:

- Trustee Sargent expressed support for Trustee Bottomley’s position, and recognized his passion for the subject. Suggestion tabled for NNDSB to lead with this perspective when it comes to budget deliberations, replacing equipment, etc.
- Trustee Fry supported a call to action in support of NNDSB becoming a leader on the need for change in the school community.
- Vice-Chair Cochrane recognized the importance of this issue to NNDSB students and staff. Support expressed for Trustee Sargent’s recommendation regarding budget priorities.
- Trustee Steer pointed to the need for the resolution to recognize a review/modification of decisions regarding capital projects.

Further comment from Trustee Bottomley to caution against delay. A motion was put forward “that NNDSB declare we are in a climate emergency and will take all necessary steps to make our school board fossil fuel free”. Motioned by Trustee Bottomley, seconded by Vice-Chair Cochrane.

Chair Aspin opened the floor for consensus. Further comments offered:

- Trustee Sargent offered her support to the motion on the floor, with further consideration for Director Myles to direct all schools to develop additional ways to help.
- Director Myles acknowledged the importance of environmental stewardship, but shared perspective for trustees to be aware of setting targets the Board would

- struggle to adhere to.
- Board Chair Aspin summarized the thoughts and comments expressed with a final comment to defer this matter to senior administration to develop a thorough plan.
 - Objection expressed by Trustee Bottomley, due to the delay of further inaction.
 - Caution expressed by Trustee Fry that the Board may overcommit itself by stating “all necessary steps”, suggestion to temper this language to the board “strive and endeavour to take all reasonable steps”.

Final direction from Board Chair Aspin to defer the language suggestions raised by Trustee Fry to the Executive Assistant to develop in preparation to the Board tabled this as an “item for discussion” during regular session.

8.0 Motion to Adjourn

Motion: L. Sargent/ H. Fry

That we do now adjourn at 7:44 PM. – **Carried**